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~ ARTICLES ~

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BOOKS

What it means to be on the Right

by Adriano Romualdi

(…) What should ‘being on the Right’ actually mean?

1) Being on the Right means, first and foremost, recognising the subversive nature of the movements that sprang from the French Revolution, be they liberalism, democracy or socialism.

2) Being on the Right means, secondly, recognising the decadent nature of rationalist, progressivist and materialist myths that pave the way for the advent of a plebeian civilisation, the reign of quantity, and the tyranny of anonymous and monstrous masses.

3) Thirdly, being on the Right means conceiving of the State as an organic whole in which political values take precedence over economic structures, and where the saying ‘to each his own’ does not mean equality, but fair qualitative inequality.

4) Finally, being on the Right means embracing as one’s own that aristocratic, religious and warrior spirit which has left its mark on European civilisation, and — in the name of this spirit and its values — accepting the struggle against the decadence of Europe.

It is interesting to see to what extent this right-wing consciousness has emerged in contemporary European thought. There is an anti-democratic tradition running throughout the nineteenth century which — in the formulations of the first decade of the twentieth — directly paved the way for fascism. One might trace its origins to *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in which Burke was the first to unmask the tragic Jacobin farce and to warn that ‘no country can survive for long without an aristocratic body of one kind or another’.

Subsequently, this body of writing sought to support the Restoration through the works of the German Romantics and the French reactionaries. Consider Novalis’s aphorisms, with their reactionary spirit sparkling with novelty and revolution (‘Burke hat ein revolutionäres Buch gegen die Revolution geschrieben’) [1], and his evocative and prophetic foreshadowings: ‘Ein grosses Fehler unserer Staaten ist, dass man den Staat zu wenig sieht… Liessen sich nicht Abzeichen und Uniformen durchaus einführen?’ [2].

Consider Adam Müller, with his polemic against Adam Smith's liberal atomism, and his contrast of a national economy with the liberal economy. Consider Gentz, Metternich's adviser and secretary of the Congress of Vienna; Gorres; Baader; and Schelling himself. Alongside them stands Friedrich Schlegel with his wide-ranging interests: the journal *Europa*, a manifesto of European reactionary thought; his glorification of the Middle Ages; his early studies on Indo-European origins; and his polemic with Italian liberals over the patriotism of Dante, a patriot of the 'Empire' rather than a narrow-minded nationalist.

Consider De Maistre, that master of the counter-revolution who extolled the executioner as a symbol of virile and positive order; Viscount De Bonald; Chateaubriand, the great writer and reactionary politician; and the radicalism of Donoso Cortés: 'I see the time of absolute negations and sovereign affirmations drawing near'. Moreover, purely reactionary criticism had very clear limitations in its rejection of those national and bourgeois forces that aspired to establish a new solidarity beyond Enlightenment negations. Arndt, Jahn, Fichte, but also Hegel of *The Philosophy of Right*, belong to the counter-revolutionary camp due to their national-solidaristic conception of the state, even if they do not share its legitimist dogmatism. This exclusion of national forces (even where, as in Germany, they hold anti-liberal positions) is the limitation of the Holy Alliance's policy. Once Metternich's system had collapsed, due to the short-sightedness of its underlying conception (combating revolution through the police and by restoring eighteenth-century legality), the counter-revolution split into two branches: one lingered on purely legitimist, confessional positions, destined to be swept aside; the other sought new paths and a new logic.

Carlyle rails against the spirit of the age, Manchester utilitarianism ('it is not that the city of Manchester has become richer, but that some of the least likeable individuals in the city of Manchester have become richer'), and Giuseppe Mazzini's humanitarianism ('what is all this rose-tinted nonsense?'). He seeks the key to history in heroes and sees democracy as a temporary eclipse of the heroic spirit.

In 1853, Gobineau published his memorable *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, establishing the idea of aristocracy on racial grounds. Gobineau's work was taken up in the writings of the Germans Clauss, Günther and Rosenberg, the Frenchman Vacher de Lapouge, and the Englishman H. S. Chamberlain. Through this, the concept of 'race', fundamental to nationalism, was wrested from the arbitrariness of various national myths and traced back to the Nordic-Indo-European ideal as an objective measure of the European ideal.

At the turn of the century, the vanguard of the Right lay in Friedrich Nietzsche's polemic against democratic civilisation. Nietzsche, even more so than Carlyle and Gobineau, was the architect of a modern 'fascist' Right, to which he bestowed a language sparkling with revolutionary negations. Typically Nietzschean are the mockery of the adversary, the readiness to attack, and the revolutionary audacity ('was fällt, das soll man auch [noch] stossen'). Nietzsche's words were taken up in Italy by Mussolini and d'Annunzio, in Germany by Jünger and Spengler, and in Spain by Ortega y Gasset.

Meanwhile, even within nationalism, a ‘shift in orientation’ had taken place. Already in the writings of the German Romantics, the nation was no longer the disjointed mass, the Jacobin ‘nation’, but the ‘Ständische’ society, with its social bodies, its traditions and its nobility. A society — as Friedrich Schlegel taught — is all the more national the more closely it is bound to its customs, its blood, and its ruling classes, which represent its continuity throughout history.

By the end of the century, a reworking of nationalism in the spirit of conservatism had been accomplished. Maurras and Barrès in France, Oriani and Corradini in Italy, the Pan-Germanists and the ‘youth movement’ in Germany, Kipling and Rhodes in England, all imbued the national idea with a traditionalist and authoritarian character. The new nationalism is essentially an element of order.

Finis Europae

by Adriano Romualdi

Every year, as April draws to a close and the spring wind stirs up dust on the streets, the boisterous celebrations of 25 April tear us away from our usual thoughts to remind us of the tragic end of the war: the political and spiritual collapse of Italy and Europe. In truth, no occasion is more fitting for us to properly assess the moral magnitude of the catastrophe: the flags at the windows celebrating a military defeat; the united jubilation of the Russian and American parties which, so many years on, continue to represent the interests of their masters against the European national interest; the glorification of massacre and civil hatred.

“There are periods in history (…) which glow from afar with an inextinguishable radiance, as if set apart by a circle of light against the dull backdrop of world history. Encircled by this magical belt of fire, men and events reappear (…) like the faint outlines of buildings swallowed up by a fire blazing on the horizon on a clear night”

Yet, beyond the commemorative hagiography, the dramatic significance of the anniversary remains. For the war whose end we are celebrating was not merely a civil and world war, but the historical tragedy that led to Europe’s dethronement and transferred the reins of command over our continent to Russia and America. With this tragedy, the decline of the West, prophesied by Spengler in 1917, becomes an overwhelming, undeniable reality.

There are periods in history, often concluded within the brief span of months or years, which glow from afar with an unquenchable radiance, as if isolated by a circle of light against the dull backdrop of world history. Encircled by this magical belt of fire, people and events reappear with an almost unreal slowness and richness of detail, like the faint outlines of buildings swallowed up by a fire blazing on the horizon on a clear night. These are the crucial eras, those in which the Gospel of History beats its great wings, bringing either relief or terror to peoples, and in which, in the course of a few tumultuous events, the destinies of civilisations are decided.

The Second World War belongs to these eras; it marks Europe’s ultimate struggle against political death and ends with its long, desperate agony. In it, every brief episode crystallises in the memory of the ages, every figure undergoes a heroic stylisation, every battle becomes an epic and a myth.

Europe's agony is a long one. It begins at dawn on 6 June 1944, when the sea off Normandy is suddenly black with ships. It is an immense and fearsome naval armada, the greatest fleet of all time, assembled to unleash a flood of men and weapons upon the defences of the Western Wall. America, with its forces intact and its mighty industrial potential, hurls hundreds of thousands of soldiers against the bastions of the European motherland. It is historical nemesis turning against the old continent, guilty of having failed to guarantee adequate means of livelihood to millions of its children and of having let them flee across the Ocean to bolster the strength of the great materialistic republic of the rootless. The battle rages fiercely along the white coastal strip of the Cotentin Peninsula. Every minute, every hour resounds with terrifying roars and deadly explosions: it is the longest day of the war, as Rommel had called it. The defence is unequal but desperate; 'The SS men,' an American survivor would later recount, 'threw themselves at our tanks like wolves on their prey. They forced us to kill them even when we would have been content to take them prisoner'. And this was the decisive moment of the war: if the Americans were driven back into the sea, if the Westwall defences held, the great invasion of the continent could be attempted again in two or three years' time. In that time, everything could change. But the overwhelming superiority of the forces and total air supremacy decided the outcome of the battle.

When one reflects on those events, one's thoughts dwell on certain obsessive details that bear the mark of fate. Such as the failure to act on the intelligence report from German counter-intelligence, which had identified the code-word for the invasion broadcast in cipher by British radio stations; and Rommel's absence, as he was visiting his wife on her birthday. But, two days before the Normandy landings, a very different omen had appeared, signalling disaster and doom for the entire continent: the fall of Rome. Rome, the city that gave birth to Western civilisation, had been occupied by Allied troops on 4 June. Indeed, on the road to Rome, ever since that distant January when they had landed at the port of Anzio, the Americans had left a trail of dead in their wake. And on this very front, a number of obscure military engagements had taken place – minor in the overall chronicle of the war, yet fraught with significance for the honour of our people: for the first time since 8 September, Italian soldiers had fought on the front line against the invader.

In April, following his meeting with Hitler at Klessheim, Mussolini had visited the Italian divisions training in Germany. With indescribable jubilation, Mussolini had been greeted by a single cry rising from the mouths of those twelve thousand men: 'To Nettuno! To Nettuno!'. Now that first call to battle and sacrifice had been confirmed in blood. The Barbarigo Battalion, together with the volunteers of the Italian SS, had valiantly held the front between Borgo Piave and Lake Pogliano. Of a thousand, fewer than 400 remained. At Ardea and Pratica di Mare, the very young men of the Folgore Division performed feats of extraordinary valour. They too fought to the last man, charging the enemy hordes with muskets and, when necessary, with daggers. Of the 980 who had gone into action on 31 May, by 3 June only 30 remained. And these thirty heroic, desperate men, retreating towards Rome with hearts full of anguish at the loss of their comrades, still found the strength to halt, set up their machine-guns, and unleash their final, furious bursts of fire against the enemy.

The collapse of the Atlantic Wall and the occupation of France, completed by early September, constituted the first example of 'liberation' on a grand scale and, consequently, the great dress rehearsal for the new 'liberating' practice. Europe, which had not yet had the chance to familiarise itself with this new political trend, held its breath in the face of these new horrors, of a purely democratic nature. 'Oh liberty, how many crimes are committed in your name!': these words, spoken by Madame Roland as she ascended the guillotine, are the best commentary on the bloody carnage with which an attempt was made to destroy all those French people who had collaborated with Germany to create a new European order. According to official statements by a post-war French minister, the number of victims ran to over 105,000. Countless others were crammed into prisons overflowing with men and women. The anti-Bolshevik volunteers, who had shed their blood on Russian soil to defend Europe from communism, suffered the cruel vengeance of their Red comrades, who hunted them down, massacred them and tortured them. It was an immense tragedy that foreshadowed the one which would engulf the whole of Europe a few months later.

November 1941: on their return from the 'autumn trip' to Germany, where an international conference of European writers had been held, we see two giants of France from those years together: Pierre Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach. Alongside them, amongst others, is Abel Bonnard, poet and novelist, Minister of Education in the Vichy Government (click to enlarge)

Among the victims of 'freedom' are some of France's finest minds: the writers Céline and Chateaubriand, forced into exile; Charles Maurras, who paid for his battle against democratic hypocrisy with a life sentence; Drieu La Rochelle, who took his own life because he could not bear to survive in a world that had collapsed; and Brasillach, who was shot in February 1945 after, in September of the previous year, Brasillach had never been actively involved in politics, nor had he ever been a member of any party. But he had placed his work as a poet and writer at the service of what he believed to be the cause of European youth. In prison, he still penned his final writings, the verses of the unforgettable 'Poems of Fresnes': 'I feel the pain of my country with its cities ablaze – the suffering inflicted upon it by its enemies and its allies – I feel the anguish of my country, torn asunder in body and soul – trapped in the iron snare of suffering'.

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Meanwhile, during the sweltering summer that saw the liberation of France, the Allies advanced up the Italian peninsula towards the Gothic Line. In the north, the Social Republic was preparing for the fiercest and most desperate struggle. The invasion of the national territory and the intensification of communist terrorism called for a national mobilisation of the fighting forces. Party members, aged between 18 and 60, were armed. Thus the Black Brigades were born. The driving force behind this fierce resistance, behind this new Fascism which had rediscovered the spirit and audacity of the action squads, was Pavolini. Young, dynamic, interested in cultural issues and a writer in his own right, Pavolini – who came from one of Florence's most distinguished families – embodied the desperate energy of the final battle, the resolve to fight to the bitter end.

It was he who organised the Fascists of Florence for the final stand in the city. In Florence, cleared of the Germans, the Fascist snipers held out for a week. Men, women and children fired from the rooftops at the Allies and the Communists. After the war ended, when asked which Italian city he had liked best, an American officer replied: “Florence, because it’s the only city where I saw Italians who had the courage to shoot at us.” Malaparte would devote an unforgettable passage in *La Pelle* to the description of the execution of Florentine snipers – boys and girls aged fifteen or sixteen who died mocking their executioners as they shouted: ‘Long live Mussolini!’. And it is the only clean, luminous page in that otherwise so grimly sordid and opaque book, the only one in which the Italian name emerges honoured.

But the great, terrifying threat looms from the East. Since the tragic days of Stalingrad, Bolshevism has continued its unstoppable march westwards. In the summer of ’44, it forced open the eastern gates of Europe and swept through the Balkans. The betrayal of Romania and Bulgaria allowed the Soviets to join forces with Tito’s bands and enter Belgrade on 22 October. A few days earlier, on the 15th, whilst the Russians were forcing their way through the Carpathian passes, Horthy had requested an armistice. The Germans swiftly restored order by forming a government headed by Major Szálasi, the leader of the Arrow Cross Party, an advocate of resistance to the bitter end against the Soviet hordes sweeping across Hungary, burning, looting and raping.

At the same time, Soviet troops continued their advance in the northern sector of the Eastern Front. In August, they occupied the eastern suburb of Warsaw, Praha, separated from the rest of the city by the Vistula. An uprising flared up in the Polish capital. It was miserably crushed by the Germans under the impassive gaze of the Russians who, from across the river, watched with satisfaction as the last of the Polish ‘bourgeois’ forces were massacred. In September and October, the tragedy of the Baltic states unfolded as they were reoccupied by the Russians. As many as three hundred thousand refugees followed the retreat of the German armies, whilst the surviving forces of the Wehrmacht entrenched themselves in a pocket in Courland.

The destruction of Dresden, the greatest catastrophe in human history caused by aerial bombardment. The firestorms (‘Feuerstürme’) unleashed by the RAF’s incendiary bombs – containing petrol, thermite and phosphorus – claimed at least 250,000 lives (click to enlarge)

The war is now raging on Germany’s borders whilst German cities burn, night and day, in a ceaseless inferno of bombs. Yet the will to resist remains unshakeable. The Allies persist in demanding unconditional surrender. On the other hand, the Russians have eloquently made their intentions clear by massacring every last woman and child in the first German village to fall into their hands. The response to all this is the V1 and V2, the deadly new weapons bearing the name of vengeance (Vergeltung 1 and 2), which fly across the English Channel like fiery arrows. Faced with the threat of invasion of their homeland, total mobilisation is declared. Thus the Volkssturm, the ‘people’s storm’, is formed, with both the elderly and the very young fighting in its ranks. On 2 October, the Americans arrive at the gates of the first German city, Aachen.

When ordered to surrender, the garrison commander replied that ‘a city where 14 German emperors were crowned does not surrender without the honour of a fight’. The battle raged for twenty days. In the city centre, the SS sacrificed themselves to the last man to allow the defenders to retreat and to re-establish a front on the Ruhr that would hold for a full four months. From the burnt-out cities, from the streets cluttered with carts and the wounded, from the deep Germanic forests, the anthem of the Young Hitlerites still rings out: ‘The rotten bones of the world tremble – in the face of the great war – but we shall continue to march – even as everything around us falls to pieces’.

Yet, amidst the turmoil of war, the end of 1944 brings a little relief, a moment of unexpected tranquillity, of renewed hope. The European stronghold has been overrun, but on the Vistula front, along the Siegfried Line, on the Gothic Line, and in Hungary, the situation is beginning to stabilise. The world is blanketed in snow which, like the misty sky preventing the Allied bombers from flying, seems to spread out to offer Europe relief and protection. Days of hope and euphoria are still possible, such as the one when Mussolini spoke in Milan, at the Teatro Lirico. On his way out, an indescribable crowd surrounds him, greeting him with raised arms. They throng round him, shouting emphatically, ‘Duce, Duce!’. It is Mussolini’s final speech and his last triumph. He spoke with moderation and firmness, outlined the Republic’s achievements, and criticised the Germans. The response is immense throughout Italy, which is forced to admit that Fascism has managed to overcome the crisis of 1943, that it still has men and opportunities, and that, above all, it can still captivate the young.

But quite a different hope comes from the Western Front. One day in December, the German army – which everyone had written off as exhausted and gasping for breath – launched a violent offensive. The SS emerged from their snow-covered foxholes and overran the surprised and unprepared American defences. It was the Battle of the Ardennes, the Wehrmacht’s swan song. The target was Antwerp, the great Belgian port without which the Americans could not continue their offensive against Germany. It was Hitler’s last, brilliant move, as he attempted to repeat the manoeuvre of 1940: splitting the enemy front and encircling part of it. For this final, desperate surprise attack, every possible and impossible measure had been taken. Skorzeny, the legendary liberator of Mussolini, crossed the lines with soldiers disguised as Americans, changing road signs and causing chaos in the enemy’s rear. For a moment, the sun of victory shone once more upon the red swastika-adorned flag. But it was the last glimmer of a falling star. Soon, the enemy’s overwhelming superiority would restore the balance.

And so, at the beginning of 1945, the curtain rises on the final act of the European tragedy. Symbolically, the first city to suffer was Budapest, which was surrounded on 24 December and besieged until 20 February. The Arrow Cross members shed their blood alongside the German soldiers. It was from that blood that the spark of the 1956 uprising would be kindled. Next came the turn of the eastern German provinces, reached by the Soviet offensive on 12 January 1945. The Silesian Gauleiter Hanke had christened the defensive works prepared against the Russians ‘Unternehmen Barthold’ – Operation Barthold – after the legendary German margrave who halted the Mongols in Silesia. Now it is truly the new hordes of Genghis Khan that are advancing.

The war seems to have returned to primeval times, when rape and plunder were the victor's reward. "Soldiers of the Red Army!" – writes the refined Jewish man of letters Ilya Ehrenburg in a propaganda proclamation – "take the German women, humiliate their racial pride!" Never has a call been taken more fervently at face value. Even young girls are repeatedly raped by ten or twenty soldiers until they bleed to death. Faced with such a brutal enemy, any act of cowardice, any retreat, is an intolerable crime.

In Italy, Slavic terror rages across the Karst. Soldiers and civilians are tortured, killed and thrown into the gloomy chasms known as foibe. Even now, that land yields the skeletons of the 'executed', one chained to the other with barbed wire, the living beside the dead, whose weight dragged his comrade into the abyss. And it is the Social Republic that can take pride in having carried out the ultimate defence of the Italian identity of Venezia Giulia. In the final days of collapse, the Fascist soldiers are heading towards the eastern front to attempt to safeguard Italy's right to those lands.

We have now reached the epilogue. On 20 April, the day of his fifty-sixth birthday, Adolf Hitler took the dramatic decision to remain in Berlin until the very end. Posters announced to the population – unaware of his presence in the city – that 'the Führer is in Berlin, the Führer will remain in Berlin, the Führer will defend Berlin until his last breath'. On the 23rd, all the air-raid sirens wailed: the Russians had penetrated the eastern districts of the city. The final battle began. Young Hitler Youth, in shorts, threw themselves at the enemy tanks. A significant detail: the last defenders of the Reich Chancellery were not Germans but the Norwegians of the SS Nordland Division and the French of the Charlemagne Division. On 30 April, Hitler took his own life. A fire blazed in the courtyard of the Chancellery whilst his last loyal followers raised their arms in salute. The following day, Goebbels followed suit, along with his wife and children. He left a note reading: "I believe that at a time like this, our cause needs examples more than it needs men."

For Italy, too, the hour of its greatest historical tragedy had arrived. The Allies were now sweeping beyond the Gothic Line, resisted in vain by Republican soldiers on the Senio and the Reno. The partisan bands could finally come down from the hills to reap the fruits of others' victory. Fruits of blood. The watchword was 'Kill the fascist wherever you find him'. The extermination of fascists is always justified, even when it comes to the 120 seventeen-year-old cadets of the Republican Guard of Oderzo, who had surrendered on the understanding that their lives would be spared, or the prisoners in Schio, treacherously murdered inside the prison. This is not disorderly turmoil or popular anger, but a systematic, precise directive from the Communist Party, which seeks to rid itself in good time of all men who might still fight to prevent it from seizing power. The last defenders of the Social Republic, taken by surprise by the catastrophe and the betrayal of the German commanders in Italy—who surrendered separately to the Allies—were captured and disarmed. Amidst the final chaos, the mirage of the redoubt in Valtellina shines out – the last battle fought amidst the eternal snows of the Alps. But fate has decided the lot of the Fascist leaders and the Duce. They share the martyrdom of the 60,000 nameless victims murdered during this week of suffering. 'Aim for the chest!': these were Mussolini's last words, leaked from the official silence imposed by the Communist leaders on those carrying out the execution.

Observations on Right-wing Culture

by Adriano Romualdi

The excerpts presented here are taken from the essay *Ideas for a Right-wing Culture*, included, together with *The Right and the Crisis of Nationalism*, in the single-volume work *A Culture for Europe*, published by Settimo Sigillo, 2013.

Why There Is No Right-Wing Culture

One of the recurring themes in our press and in conversations within our circles is the condemnation of the massive shift to the left in Italian culture. This condemnation is expressed in a tone that is part sorrowful, part surprised, as if it were unnatural for culture to have now aligned itself with that side, whilst on the right there is an almost complete void.

Usually, people try to make sense of this state of affairs with flimsy explanations – the sort that serve to reassure oneself and allow one to remain on the surface of things.

It is said — for example — that culture is on the left because that is where the greatest amount of money, publishing houses and means of propaganda are to be found. It is also said that all it would take is for the wind to change for many 'committed left-wingers' to reconsider their engagement.

There is some truth in all this. A culture—or rather, the launching pad that a culture requires—also involves organisation, money and propaganda. There is no doubt that the overwhelming dominance of Marxist-oriented publications and social-communist cinema encourages a commitment even among many who—in a different climate—would have remained neutral.

But this must not make us forget the true cause of the Left's ideological hegemony. It lies in the fact that the conditions for a culture exist there; there is a unified conception of life that is materialistic, democratic, humanitarian and progressive. This worldview and outlook on life can take on different nuances; it can manifest as radicalism and communism, neo-Enlightenment and scientism with a psychoanalytical slant, militant Marxism and 'social' Christianity. Yet one is always confronted with a unified vision of humanity, the aims of history and society.

From this shared conception springs a massive output of essays, historical works and literature which may be petty and of poor quality, but which possesses its own logic and an inherent coherence. This logic and this coherence exert an ever-growing fascination on educated people. It is no secret that a large number of secondary school and university lecturers have been 'communistised', and that the 'communistisation' of the teaching profession is spreading with alarming speed. Moreover, amongst young people in the habit of reading, left-wing ideologies are gaining ground before our very eyes.

On the Right, none of this is to be found. One finds oneself in a depressing atmosphere of petty conservatism and bourgeois respectability. One reads articles calling for culture to take greater account of 'patriotic values' and 'morality', all amidst a picturesque confusion of ideas and language.

'On the Right, people grope about in uncertainty, in ideological vagueness. They are "patriotic-Risorgimento-style" whilst ignoring the murky democratic and Masonic aspects that coexisted with the idea of Italian unification during the Risorgimento.'

On the left, they know exactly what they want. Whether the discussion concerns the nationalisation of the electricity sector or urban planning, the history of Italy or psychoanalysis, they are always working towards a specific aim: the dissemination of a certain mindset, a certain conception of life.

On the right, one gropes in uncertainty, in ideological vagueness. One may be a 'patriotic Risorgimento supporter' yet ignore the dark democratic and Masonic aspects that coexisted with the idea of Italian unification during the Risorgimento. Or one may advocate 'national liberalism' whilst forgetting that liberal mercantilism and libertarian nationalism contributed powerfully to the destruction of the European order. Or, again, one speaks of a 'national labour state' whilst forgetting that we already have – unfortunately – an Italian republic founded on labour, and that reducing our alternative to these terms merely means lowering ourselves to the rank of mere social democrats.

Perhaps there are no fewer educated people on the right than on the left. Given that the majority of the right-wing electorate is middle-class, one must conclude that there are plenty among them who have completed higher education and should have acquired a certain 'habit of reading'.

But, whilst the man of the Left also possesses elements of left-wing culture and is familiar with Marx, Freud and Salvemini, the man of the Right rarely possesses a right-wing cultural consciousness. He has no inkling of Nietzsche's importance in the critique of civilisation; he has never read a novel by Junger or Drieu La Rochelle; he is unaware of *The Twilight of the West*; nor does he question that the French Revolution was a great chapter in the history of human progress. As long as the conversation remains within the realm of culture, he is a fine liberal, perhaps a little nationalistic and patriotic. It is only when he starts talking about politics that he stands out: he reckons that Mussolini was a good man who did not want war, and that Pasolini's films are 'filthy'.

It does not take much to realise that if there is no culture on the right, it is because there is no true idea of the right, no qualitative, aristocratic, competitive, anti-democratic worldview; no coherent vision that transcends certain interests, certain nostalgies and certain political clichés.

Guidelines for a New Right-Wing Culture

What challenges face those who wish to tackle the issue of right-wing culture?

First and foremost, a proper framing of the problem is required. And the first step towards this is to define the relationship between the Right and culture.

It must be made clear that, for the man of the Right, cultural values do not occupy that exalted status to which writers of a rationalist bent elevate them. For the true man of the Right, genuine spiritual values take precedence over culture; these find expression in the lifestyle of true aristocracies, in military organisations, and in religious traditions that are still alive and active.

First comes a certain way of being, a certain orientation towards certain realities; then comes the echo of this orientation in the form of philosophy, art and literature.

In a traditional civilisation, in a right-wing world, the living spirit comes first and the written word second.

Only bourgeois civilisation, born of Enlightenment scepticism, could conceive of replacing the heroic and ascetic spirit with the myth of culture, the dictatorship of the philosophes.

The democrat worships problems, dialectics and debate, and would gladly transform life into a café or a parliament. For the man of the Right, by contrast, intellectual inquiry and artistic expression acquire meaning only as a form of communication with the sphere of being, with something which — however conceived — no longer belongs to the realm of debate but to that of truth. The true right-winger is instinctively a homo religiosus, not in the merely fideistic or devotional sense of the term, but because he measures his values not by the yardstick of progress but by that of truth.

Arthur Moeller van den Bruck: “Being a conservative does not mean depending on the immediate past, but living by eternal values”.

‘To be a conservative,’ wrote Moeller van den Bruck, ‘does not mean being dependent on the immediate past, but living by eternal values’.

Right-wing culture and art cannot claim to be the temple itself, but only the vestibule of the temple. Living truth lies beyond.

Hence a certain wariness on the part of the genuine right-winger towards modern culture, an impersonal contempt for the rabble of literary figures, aesthetes and journalists. Recall Nietzsche’s words: ‘Once thought was God; then it became man; now it has become the rabble. Another century of readers and the spirit will rot, it will stink’.

Hence the hostility of Fascism and Nazism towards the type of the 'deraciné' intellectual. This hostility stems not only from the crude distrust of the squadrist and the Landsknecht towards the refinements of culture, but also from the aspiration to a spirituality built on heroism, loyalty, discipline and sacrifice. José Antonio urged his Falangists to adopt an 'ascetic and military outlook on life'.

Having set this out, let us consider more closely the task of fostering a right-wing culture. The aim, as we have said, is the construction of a worldview inspired by values different from those that dominate today. Not theory or philosophy, but a 'worldview'. This leaves ample scope for particular approaches. One can work to create a right-wing worldview from both a Catholic and a 'neo-pagan' perspective, whether by projecting the Novalian myth of 'Europe-Christianity' or by upholding the identity of 'Europe-Arianism'.

A modest but interesting example of this 'concordia discors' is provided by the youth magazines of early neo-fascism. *Cantiere* and *Carattere* on the Catholic side, and *Imperium* and *Ordine Nuovo* on the Evlian side, contributed significantly to a process of re-evaluation of certain bourgeois and jingoistic myths characteristic of the old Right.

These magazines, and others we have not mentioned (Il Ghibellino, Barbarossa, Tradizione, etc.), helped — albeit with significant limitations — to initiate a certain discourse. They owed everything, or almost everything, to the man who may well be described as the mentor of the neo-fascist youth: Julius Evola. Without books such as *Gli uomini e le rovine* and *Cavalcare la tigre*, it would not have been possible to maintain a free cultural space on the Right. But Evola stands alone, and his work now lies behind him. New creative forces are needed, or at least an intelligent effort to disseminate ideas. The specific fields of history, philosophy and non-fiction must be cultivated. Something must be attempted in the realm of art. It is no coincidence that Evola compared tradition to a vein that needs countless capillaries to carry blood throughout the body.

What Might the Tasks of a Cultural Right Be?

In the realm of worldview, the formulation of an organic rather than mechanical, qualitative rather than quantitative conception—a Ganzheitslehre for which there exists a whole series of points of reference, from Schelling to Othmar Spann. But certain strands of idealism—purified of a certain historicist mythology—may also serve as points of reference against neo-Marxism and neo-Enlightenment. From Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* to the best of Gentile, certain elements can be utilised. Not to be overlooked is the critique of science and the mathematical conception of the cosmos, in which both the critique of Boutroux's concept of the law of nature and even Bergson's *élan vital* can serve as points of rupture for a conception of the universe that is not mathematical, but voluntaristic and spiritualistic.

Thus, there are quite numerous points of reference in this field. The important thing is to realise that a worldview must also be formulated in logical terms, and not merely in mythical ones. The significance of Evola compared to Guénon lies in the fact that he is underpinned by a Theory and a Phenomenology of the Absolute Individual—that is, a genuine system of thought characterised by the utmost consistency and coherence. In an age of dominant rationalism, one cannot expect people to accept a form of 'traditionalism' that presents itself in more or less fideistic terms.

As far as science proper is concerned, one must first and foremost take on board the reservations expressed by great contemporary scientists such as Heisenberg and Weiszäcker regarding the scientific method as a tool for absolute knowledge. It is important to realise that modern physics does not recognise 'matter' but rather a series of hypotheses centred on a conceptually indefinable entity.

A second field is that of anthropology. Anthropologists such as the American Jensen (The Heritability of Intelligence) and the Englishman Eysenck (Race, Intelligence and Education) have analysed the intellectual gap between whites and blacks, emphasising hereditary factors. Another American, Carleton S. Coon, in his *The Origin of Races* — considered the most important study on the origins of humankind after Darwin's works — has shown that human races do not share a common ancestor but crossed the threshold of hominisation separately. These are fundamental assertions, which the mass media strive to ignore but which the Right cannot afford to disregard, given their anti-egalitarian implications.

On the fringes of science lies one of today's most hotly debated topics: ecology. Well, it would be absurd for the Right to cede this issue to the Left when the very ultimate meaning of its struggle lies precisely in the preservation of the differences and distinctive characteristics necessary for the spiritual balance of the planet—a preservation of which the protection of the natural environment forms a part.

History is one of the fields most fiercely targeted by the opposing offensive. Demonstrating that the Right is opposed to 'the meaning of history' is one of the cheapest ways to discredit it in the eyes of an age ready to equate technical progress with progress in the absolute sense.

First and foremost, we must make room for a conception of history that is not merely evolutionary. Thinkers such as Oswald Spengler, Toynbee, Günther and Altheim can offer points of reference.

The conception of history as mechanical 'progress' must be countered by a historical vision that recognises periods of development and periods of regression. Generally speaking, there is no single history of humanity, but only histories of different peoples and civilisations; for example, a history of Europe as the evolution of the Indo-European peoples through the prehistoric, Greco-Roman and medieval-modern cycles.

This conception of a European 'culture' is also what helps us to understand more recent history. All right-wing historiography from the 19th century onwards has been written from a national and nationalistic perspective. This framework was not methodologically flawed, but it was narrow. It revealed its limitations when fascism presented itself as a European movement for the restructuring of the entire European civilisation. This is why the books of the followers of nationalism, such as Tamaro's *Vent'anni di storia* (*Twenty Years of History*), leave us unsatisfied due to their lack of an adequate historiographical perspective.

The realm of art deserves special mention. Here, clarity of direction is not enough; one must integrate the 'correct' theses with that infallibility of taste which confers artistic nobility upon a worldview.

What is right-wing art? It is not simply a matter of writing good novels or poems that differ in content, but of expressing a distinct stylistic tension. There are books by 'committed' right-wing authors in which one would struggle to find this new dimension. It may, however, emerge in the work of less engagé writers. Take, for example, Jünger's *On the Cliffs of Marble*.

Although this author was, for a time, very close to Nazism, he subsequently distanced himself from it, adopting a critical stance. Yet one would be hard-pressed to find anything more 'right-wing' than this story: the aristocratic impersonality of the narrative, the impeccable and sparkling style, and the absence of even the slightest trace of bourgeois psychologism make it a model that is hard to forget.

Generally speaking, these characteristics are found in all of Jünger's finest works. Jünger's literary content is somewhat refined. Yet a 'right-wing' artistic sensibility can also breathe life into sparse, austere, 'naturalistic' material. Such is the case with the novels of the Norwegian Hamsun, which are largely stories of northerners: fishermen, sailors and farmers. Here too, albeit to a lesser extent, there is a steadfast and measured dignity and — at the same time — a mythical element in the stories of these simple souls struggling against fate within the magnetic atmosphere of the northern landscape.

Here we must confine ourselves to a couple of examples – the first ones that spring to mind. But everyone can understand what we meant and supplement these brief remarks with their own insight and knowledge. These reflections apply to all the arts: content takes a back seat to form. Take, for example, the ease with which Fascism appropriated modern architecture to express a worldview that is anything but 'modern'. Consider the classical-modern architecture of the University of Rome or that of the Foro Mussolini. These are minor works, but they are well-executed, and the spirit that emanates from that gleaming geometry is not the barrenness of skyscrapers, but the hard, luminous substance of the ancient soul: order, proportion, strength, discipline, clarity.

Anyone can see that *The Siege of the Alcázar* is a good piece of fascist propaganda. But, strictly speaking, an anti-fascist epic could just as easily have been made using the same language. On the other hand, there are certain shots by the Jewish communist Eisenstein (we have in mind a few frames from *Ivan the Terrible*) which, due to their nationalist and authoritarian mysticism, cannot fail to be described as 'right-wing'. It is well known that Fritz Lang, the director of *The Nibelungs*, was a staunch communist who fled Germany upon Hitler's rise to power.

Yet few films capture the heroic, mythical and pagan *Stimmung* of Nazi Germany as effectively as his masterpiece. And Goebbels demonstrated remarkable intelligence in choosing him to direct the film about the Nuremberg Congress.

Another example: Ingmar Bergman. This filmmaker can certainly not be called a 'fascist' (although the communists once tried to label him as such). Yet there is in some of his works a symbolic power which — when carried over from the realm of art into the social sphere — cannot fail to exert certain, precise influences that his opponents would readily describe as 'irrationalist and fascist'. We have in mind certain shots from *The Seventh Seal*. Recall the mythical and solemn landscapes, the presence of the invisible at the heart of the visible, the hero's drama. The intention here is not to convey any political message, but the impression the viewer gains from the whole is anything but 'democratic', 'social' and 'humanistic'.

Naturally, here too it is instinct that decides. Those who are truly right-wing, those who are inwardly shaped by certain values, by a particular ethos, will immediately recognise the artistic impressions that belong to their world. 'Aesthetics' derives from *aisthànomai*, a form of knowledge through immediate sensation.

The considerations set out here are not systematic in nature. They merely seek to address a problem, not to define it. Moreover, in this field, even general guidelines suffice. Beyond these, each individual must proceed according to their own knowledge and abilities.

A few brief remarks suffice to outline the lines of development of a right-wing culture. But this abstract orientation will begin to take shape when individuals set about writing and creating.

Ernst Jünger and the Spirit of the Front as a Permanent Reality (Part I)

by Adriano Romualdi

Part One

The most significant exponent of the German ‘front-line’ generation, the theorist of militant nationalism and total Mobilmachung [1], is Ernst Jünger. Born in Heidelberg in 1895, a war volunteer at the age of nineteen, wounded thirteen times, commander of an assault troop on the Verdun front, and decorated with the rare Pour le mérite honour, Jünger made his name in the post-war period with the autobiographical narratives *In Stahlgewittern* [2], *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* [3], *Das Wäldchen 125* [4] and *Feuer und Blut* [5].

The young Jünger decorated with the ‘Pour le mérite’ honour

Around 1926–1927, he gathered around him a group of young intellectuals such as Franz Schauwecker, Ernst von Salomon, Friedrich Hielscher, Albrecht Erich Günther, Helmut Franke, Werner Best, etc. A common characteristic of this group, which spread its ideas from Berlin, was that it took the experience of the front as the starting point for its critique of values and society.

Jünger had no ties to any political party. His initial sympathy for Hitler (he had heard him speak at the Krone Circus in Munich and had sent him his books with a dedication) soon turned into a critical stance, and his personal acquaintance with Goebbels did nothing to improve matters. Essentially, the group around Jünger maintained a balance between the conservative circles of the Reichswehr and the Stahlhelm and the National Bolshevik circles of a figure such as Ernst Niekisch.

The journals published by Ernst Jünger – *Arminius*, *Der Vormarsch*, *Die Kommenden* and *Standarte* – are undoubtedly among the most notable of post-war German nationalism, and in them one can find all the most significant figures of the young national movement. They present themselves as the expression of a ‘new nationalism’, which has little time for a certain kind of patriotic rhetoric and which focuses directly on the soldierly element as the necessary foundation for building a new type of human being. Thus, the introduction to the first issue of *Standarte* reads:

‘We, the fighters of yesterday, today and tomorrow, found ourselves in an era in which everything we had believed in – and for which we had seen countless men die – seemed to be sinking into a sea of futility. When we gathered in various places and around various figures, it was above all out of a deep-seated conviction of the need for defence. We could not renounce that for which we had sacrificed everything. We had to keep alive our faith that everything that was happening had a profound and inevitable meaning. Our first decision had to be to remain faithful to tradition and to give refuge, within our hearts, to the banners that could no longer be displayed without shame. This is how the best among us must have felt at the time; thus, those who were the most resolute yesterday must also be the most resolute tomorrow, and the reactionaries of the past must become the revolutionaries of the future. For in the meantime, we have learnt that our task is greater and more important. The word ‘tradition’ has taken on a new meaning for us; in it we no longer see the finished form, but rather the vital and eternal spirit, the shaping of which each generation is accountable only to itself. And we are —and we feel this every day with renewed awareness—we are a new generation, a lineage which, through the heat and the hammer blows of the greatest war in history, has been hardened and transformed to its very core. Whilst the process of dissolution is being completed in all political parties, we are already thinking, feeling and living in an entirely different form, and there is no doubt even now that, as our self-awareness grows, we shall be able to give expression to this form. For this reason, we feel ourselves to be chosen fighters for a new state.’

This new form, this new state of which Jünger is the spokesperson, is the regime of ‘total mobilisation’, transferred from the military to the civilian sphere. For Jünger, the revolutionary factor of the twentieth century is total war, the sister of the planet’s technical-industrial mobilisation. The problem he sets himself is that of adapting states and individuals to the political and spiritual tasks that total mobilisation presents. *Die totale Mobilmachung* is, in fact, the title of the essay in which he outlines this conception of his (6), the line of thought of which is taken up in greater depth in *Der Arbeiter*. Total mobilisation is the phenomenon that has shaken the foundations of pre-war liberalism, giving rise to a new spirit in the face of which bourgeois individualism and political tolerance appear as values ill-suited to the age of total conflict.

In this era, ‘there is no longer any real distinction between combatants and non-combatants; in it, every city, every factory is a fortification, every vessel is a warship, every foodstuff is contraband, and every active and passive measure has a military character’[7]. Out of total mobilisation has arisen a new totalitarian climate in which life is once again conceived as service, sacrifice and responsibility, rather than as a business venture or a field of ‘demands’. It restores to nationalism the very soul of which the everyday reality of bourgeois liberalism had deprived it. The state ceases to be ‘a passenger or cruise ship, and becomes a warship in which the utmost simplicity and austerity must reign, and every act must be carried out with instinctive certainty’[8].

From this perspective, Jünger equates Bolshevism and nationalism as expressions of the same totalitarian will that must make its way. Both contribute to the destruction of a certain bourgeois type that has now become obsolete and help to create the protagonist of the new era, the ‘political soldier’, for whom there is no longer any difference between war and peace, propaganda and revolution: he is the archetype of the SA militant (at the time Jünger was writing *Die totale Mobilmachung*, their numbers ran into hundreds of thousands), to whom the figure of the Rote Front—also in uniform and boots—closely resembles.

In contrast to the bourgeois type, Jünger articulates his famous paradox that ‘it is infinitely more desirable to strive to become a criminal than a bourgeois’ (unendlich erstrebenswerter sei, Verbrocher als Bürger zu sein).

Der unbekannte S.A.-Mann, the ‘unknown S.A. man’, the prototype of the political soldier theorised by Jünger. This was the title of an S.A. training manual that remained strictly anonymous, precisely to indicate the active impersonality of a mindset and attitude that were to characterise the New Man of National Socialist Germany.

Jünger characterised this new human substance of the ‘political soldier’—emerging from the trauma of war and the collapse of bourgeois values—in many of his writings: ‘Social strata are beginning to stir that are very difficult to define, both in terms of their origin and their composition. It is an intelligent, exasperated, explosive human mixture, which makes use, in its own way, of an unbridled freedom of association, of speech and of the press. Here the differences between reaction and revolution merge in a strange way: theories emerge in which the concepts of ‘conservative’ and ‘revolutionary’ are desperately conflated. The prisons are filling up with a new sort of man… The marvellous resurrection of the ancient Landsknechts in those units which, after four years of war, resumed their march eastwards of their own accord; the defence of Upper Silesia; the massacre of the Rhenish separatists with axes and clubs; the protest against sanctions by means of bombings, and other exploits, in which the infallibility of an arcane instinct is revealed, are signs that future historiography will have to regard as milestones’[9].

This desperate national passion too – as experienced not only by Germany in the post-war period – is a symptom of the ‘total mobilisation’ that seizes the spirit and allows no return to bourgeois life. It is a symptom of a nationalism that moves beyond the patriotic and celebratory phase into a truly revolutionary phase. That total mobilisation proclaimed in that fateful August of 1914 is, for Jünger, the beginning of the revolution of nationalism, destined to transform European society. Socialism is inevitably drawn into this, for, in its individualistic aspect, it is affected in the same way as bourgeois society, whilst in its militant and solidarity-based aspect it finds itself dangerously resembling its adversary. Total Mobilmachung brings about ‘socialism without socialists’.

The war of 1914 was the first total war in history. It was also the first people’s war, fought by masses on a scale never before seen. Jünger sees in it the means by which nationalism – hitherto confined to a certain educated class – took root in the public consciousness, giving rise to the realisation of the need for a strictly planned economy and for political, military and industrial leadership all in one:

‘At the outbreak of the war, no one could have foreseen a mobilisation on such a scale. However, it was already becoming apparent in certain measures that had been taken, such as, for example, the increased conscription of volunteers and reservists from the very start of the war, the export ban, the censorship regulations, and the measures concerning currency. Throughout the war, this process continued to intensify; examples include: the rationing of raw materials and foodstuffs, the militarisation of industrial workers, compulsory civilian service, the arming of the merchant fleet, the unforeseeable expansion of the powers of the general staff, the Hindenburg Programme, and Ludendorff’s commitment to the unification of political and military leadership. Despite this, the extreme possibilities were not yet reached, despite the spectacle—as grandiose as it was terrifying—of the final great battles of resources, in which man’s organisational talent celebrated its bloody triumph.

Moreover, even if we confine ourselves to the purely technical aspect of this process, such extreme possibilities can only be reached if the programme of war is already factored into peacetime planning. Thus we see how, in the post-war period, in many states the new methods of armament already take into account the possibility of total mobilisation. In this regard, one may cite developments such as the radical annihilation of the concept—already highly questionable in itself—of ‘individual freedom’ in states such as Russia and Italy, where the tendency is to suppress everything that does not serve the state… Total mobilisation is an act that is not so much carried out as it unfolds of its own accord; in war and in peace, it is the expression of the mysterious and inevitable necessity to which life in this age of mass society and machinery subjects us’[10].

The concept of total mobilisation undermines freedom, taken as a political value for its own sake. Jünger, like Nietzsche before him, does not believe in freedom for freedom’s sake, and quotes that passage from Zarathustra which states that what matters is not being free from something, but free for something. The problem of our time, now that liberalism has elevated a freedom devoid of content to the status of a sacred ideal – which was nothing other than the mythologisation of the market economy – is to rediscover a positive essence to freedom. War shapes the idea of freedom by creating a new type of human being for whom freedom ‘is no longer the principle for the formation of an existence in itself, but consists in the degree to which the individual’s existence is expressed within the totality of the world in which they are embedded’.

This broader order into which the individual must be integrated is, in Jünger’s view, the nation. This choice of nationalism – since, apparently, by the same logic, one could throw oneself into the arms of any other totalitarian order, such as communism – finds in Jünger a justification distinct from ethnic or sentimental grounds. In Jünger, one finds no reference to the more conventional form of patriotism, nor any appeal to blood ties. The ‘blood and soil’ ideology is, for him, a thing of the past (die musealgewordene Ideologie von Blut und Boden), whilst the national-racial (völkisch) theories that played such a significant part in the German national movement from the late nineteenth century through to Nazism are ‘ideas clinging to the teachings of schoolmasters from thirty years ago’.

The choice of nationalism is determined by the realisation that socialism has no ideal with which to replace the values of the bourgeois world; on the contrary, it seeks to realise them on an even grander scale. The proletarian, according to Jünger's classic definition of the 1920s, is the 'bourgeois without a collar', the one who has not yet managed to become a bourgeois. The world of socialism, too, holds bourgeois values of well-being and a peaceful life as its supreme values; and, as a backdrop, not discipline or spiritual formation, but 'culture'. For Jünger, it is nationalism, with its veneration of hierarchical and military values, that can develop that ethic of the political soldier which emerged from the World War and also from the Russian Revolution. From this perspective, we return to the concept of 'that obedience which is an art of listening, and of that order which means being ready for the word, being ready for the command that, like a flash of lightning, runs from the summit down to the roots'. This unity of freedom and service has remained alien to bourgeois society: 'The age of the Third Estate has never known the marvellous power of this unity, for to it, joys that were too easy and too human seemed the only ones worthy of pursuit'[11].

The alignment of the reality of peace with the reality of war: this is the fundamental core of the theory of total Mobilmachung. Political, economic and moral alignment; the bridging of that gap revealed by war between the generation of politicians and the generation at the front. It is the consciousness of nationalism, which feels it still has new tasks before it, that drives wars and seeks to establish structures capable of sustaining them. Hence the impatience with German parliamentarianism, regarded as unworthy of the value and expertise of the German soldier: 'Members of parliament drool like overgrown infants, whilst young naval lieutenants, in the suffocating, oily vapour of their submarines, are intent on reconciling the intellectual mastery of technology with the primitive condition of the warrior'[12].

The transition from bourgeois nationalism to imperialist nationalism – inevitable in a world reorganising itself around larger spheres of influence – gives rise, in turn, to the aspiration for new political forms capable of interpreting it.

The vision of the new humanity that emerged from the experience of 'total mobilisation' finds its fullest expression in what many continue to regard as Jünger's most important book, *Der Arbeiter* ('The Worker'), in which the worker is not examined as a representative of a particular class, but, more generally, as the working man – the protagonist of the new technical-industrial mobilisation.

The Worker is intended as a kind of philosophy of civilisation; indeed, it is a description of the features of the new civilisation in the making. The starting point, here too, is a critique of the bourgeois world that emerged from the Revolution of 1789, viewed as a transitional stage of anarchy between one type of organic order and another. For Jünger, the greatest fault of the bourgeois world is that it has created an inauthentic world, devoid of any connection with the profound forces of the 'elementary' – where the term 'elementary' refers to everything that eludes simple reason, be it of a spiritual or material nature.

The bourgeois world has organised only one aspect of the human person, and is destined to be thrown into crisis by these movements which aspire to restore wholeness.

The world of the Third Estate has banished the figures of the saint, the warrior and the lord; indeed, it has gone much further, declaring them superfluous. It has placed the concept of security at the centre of life and society, reducing all judgements to a calculation of utility, yet in reaction has provoked a revolt against the values of reason the likes of which has never been seen before. Irrationalism, which became increasingly prevalent in the late Romantic movements of the nineteenth century, is a haphazard attempt to compensate for the spiritual destruction caused by the 'rationalisation' of society. It culminated in the great tide of the World War, from which—through contact with the elemental forces of technology and destruction—a new type of person emerged: familiar with technology yet hostile to modernity, master of a new arsenal of objects and knowledge, yet unwilling to use them in the way bourgeois society suggests.

'The worker' – who descends directly from the combatant of the great 'battles of the material' – is a sort of soldier of industrial society for whom technology has become an end in itself, not merely a means on the path to prosperity and bourgeoisification. The 'worker' liberates technology from the service of bourgeois society and affirms it as an autonomous entity, a unity of idealism and practice, of faith and style. He belongs to the human type laid bare by war – not the easy, enthusiastic war of 1914, but the harsh, barren, gruelling war of 1916, 1917 and 1918, which instilled in him a tenacity never before known, a refined, cold, metallic patience. It is a type that Jünger, with that blend of abstract and concrete observation which fuses the theorist with the man of letters within him, describes physically: 'the face has lost the variety of individual features whilst gaining in the decisiveness and hardness of its lines. It has become more metallic, almost galvanised on the surface; the structure of the bones stands out more; there is a simplification and a tension in the lines. The gaze is steady and calm, trained to observe objects to be captured at high speed. It is, for this reason, the face of a race that is beginning to transform itself to meet the special demands of a new environment, in which the individual will no longer represent a person or an individual, but a type'[13].

As regards the genesis of the 'Worker' type, Jünger does not see in it the advent of one class in place of another, but the adaptation of the whole of society to a certain model. What emerges is a 'figure' (Gestalt), with characteristics that transcend those of a particular category and tend to define an era. History does not produce figures but changes with the figure: this is one of Jünger's most characteristic assertions, demonstrating how he views historical transformations as biological mutations. The world of industry and the working class have, until now, been part of bourgeois reality, linked to those aims of profit and prosperity that have dominated in past centuries. With the emergence of the 'worker' as a Gestalt, however, it is society as a whole that is seized by a new rhythm: 'The entire surface of the earth is covered with the rubble of shattered images. We are witnessing a spectacle of an end comparable to geological catastrophes. It would be a waste of time to join in the pessimism of the vanquished or the superficial optimism of the victors… we are dealing with those material revolutions that coincide with the emergence of races, at whose disposal lay a magic of new means such as bronze, iron, the horse and the sail.

Just as the horse acquires meaning only through the rider, iron through the blacksmith, and the ship through the figure of the navigator, so too will the metaphysics of technical instruments reveal itself only at the point where the working-class emerges as a force superior to it'[14].

What is difficult to ascertain in Jünger's vision is to what extent the new spirit he describes actually corresponds to the world of work – as if it were capable of expressing non-utilitarian judgements – or whether, instead, it projects onto the world of work spiritual categories drawn from war and cultivated by nationalism. It is a vision that emerged in the climate of enforced austerity in post-World War I Germany, which pales somewhat when transposed into the context of the post-World War II economic miracle. *The Worker* is influenced, at least in its title, by Marxist terminology, but the values it implies are less those of the 'fourth estate' than those of the Prussian General Staff. It is, however, an expression of a spiritual symbiosis that briefly came to fruition in Berlin in 1930 between the avant-gardes of communism and nationalism, echoed by Gregor Strasser's famous phrase on the German people's anti-capitalist Sehnsucht.

'Arbeiter im Stahlwerk beim Bohren' ('Workers in a steelworks drilling'), etching by Willy Nus (c. 1940)

'Anti-capitalist nostalgia': an imprecise term in which it remains unclear whether the aim is actually to restructure society along Marxist lines, or whether what is sought is the introduction of a way of life based on solidarity. Jünger tends rather towards the latter solution. For example, with regard to property, he states that it is not a matter of denying or affirming it on the basis of preconceived criteria, but of assessing it insofar as it is capable of serving 'total mobilisation': 'There is nothing to object to regarding private initiative insofar as it is accorded the status of a special aspect of labour within the overall order'. Fundamental to this is the realisation that economic forces must be controlled by political power, and that the economy must not dictate the 'meaning' of existence: 'By denying the economic world as that which determines life—that is, as a destiny—one seeks to challenge its status, not its existence.' To this end, however, there must be overarching values.

The entire controversy between the Third and Fourth Estates, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, presupposes that the meaning of history is exhausted in the creation of the most favourable living conditions for the greatest number, and has very little to say to those who stand outside this perspective: 'It is inevitable that in this world of exploiters and the exploited, no greatness is possible which does not ultimately have its basis in economic reality. Two kinds of people, arts and moral codes are indeed set against one another, but it does not take great insight to realise that the source nourishing them is one and the same. It is also from the same kind of progress that the protagonists of the economic struggle derive their justification. They converge in the fundamental claim that each is the true champion of social prosperity, so that each is convinced they can undermine their opponent's position by denying them any right to present themselves as such'[15].

Jünger's 'worker' stands outside this context: 'he regards technology as a language for its own sake, which has value—even before its utility—in its educational function. He is not the representative of a class, in the sense of Marxist dialectics, and even less so the archetype of the exploited, 'objectified' by a new sentimentalism, differing from the previous one only in its greater pettiness." Jünger observes that 'in anyone capable of seeing clearly, there will remain only astonishment at realising how it was believed possible to undermine the bourgeois world by affirming precisely those demands that have most unequivocally consolidated it'.

The point at which the bourgeois world is thrown into crisis is that at which the characteristic assessments of the Third Estate are shattered by a new human type, indifferent both to a certain nineteenth-century idealism and to materialism. It is a 'figure' (Gestalt) capable of a degree of de-individualisation that only the great monastic and military orders have been able to produce, and which technology, in war as well as in peace, would be capable of reawakening. As such a 'figure' (Gestalt), man would reconnect with that totality of the spirit known to the organic eras of the past, and which has been lost in the critical phase through which we are currently passing:

'The individual finds himself embedded within a great hierarchy of "figures", of powers that can never be conceived in a sufficiently real, tangible, necessary way. In the face of these, he becomes a symbol, a representative, and the power, richness and meaning of his life depend on the extent to which he participates in the order and the struggle of the figures … As a 'figure', man is more than the sum of his energies and faculties; he is deeper than he can believe himself to be in his most profound musings; he is more powerful than he can demonstrate in his greatest undertakings … Embodying a 'figure' promises nothing; at best, it is a sign that life is once again on the rise, that it has a status and is creating new symbols'[16].

Ernst Jünger and the Spirit of the Front as a Permanent Reality (Part II)

by Adriano Romualdi

continued from Part I

(excerpted from Political and Ideological Currents of the German Right from 1918 to 1932)

Jünger's conception is influenced both by the image of a certain form of Bolshevism and by that of National Socialism. It tends to present itself as a 'heroic realism': the creed of a personality honed to a harsh and austere ruggedness by the demands of a grand mobilisation for struggle. It may appear rather unsettling, and even contemptuous and cynical, to the guardians of democratic humanism; but the more cynical, the more Prussian, the more Spartan and the more Bolshevik it is, the better. The aim is to reawaken true spiritual values, founded on sacrifice and courage, on seriousness and the breadth of commitment, so that 'the new type's contempt for pseudo-humanistic values will never be great enough' and 'the less culture there is in that stratum, the better it will be'. Jünger has respect for the culture of the organic ages – an era in which every artistic creation was an act of faith and a service to the whole – but he condemns the followers of bourgeois culture, culture as academy, salon, museum, which 'is a kind of narcotic'.

Even in his war diaries he had written: 'We enjoy a worldwide reputation as destroyers of cathedrals: that means a great deal in an age when the awareness of one's own sterility leads to the erection of one museum after another'.

It is not entirely clear how Jünger views the issue of this new 'worker'-type elite seizing power. He has in mind, however, a sort of single party based on an elite, an order modelled on that envisaged for years by the Bündisch ideologues. In certain passages, he refers to this order as the 'armed conscience of the state'. It is the holder of political power which, through austerity and simplicity of life, dominates the forces of wealth and the economy:

'Just as it is a pleasure to see free desert tribes who, clad in rags, have as their sole wealth their horses and their precious weapons, so too would it be a pleasure to see the magnificent and precious apparatus of civilisation served and directed by personnel living in monastic and soldierly poverty.

This is a sight that brings a manly joy, and one that has been renewed everywhere; in the face of great tasks, higher demands have been placed upon man. In this regard, phenomena such as the Order of the Teutonic Knights, the Prussian army and the Society of Jesus serve as models, and it must be noted that soldiers, priests, scientists and artists have a natural affinity with poverty'[17].

Of all the theorists of the 'conservative revolution', Jünger – due to his blend of socialism and 'military-style' nationalism – is the one who comes closest to National Socialism, far more so than the corporatist theorists in the mould of Spann, or the Prussian conservatives in the mould of Spengler. It is not surprising that the Nazis sought to win him over, offering him a parliamentary seat, and that Goebbels courted him at length to turn him into a 'supporting intellectual'. And yet Jünger kept his distance:

'The "nationalists" initially believed that Jünger's war books had made him one of their own. But deep down, he had no interest in them. The Communists wanted to see *The Worker* as a hymn to the Soviet Union. Jünger, however, kept his distance. The National Socialists hoped to win over the theorist of total mobilisation to their literary circle. He thanked them with an ironic bow and declined. After 1945, the advocates of a democratic Europe took issue with the author of the most incisive treatise on the end of the nation-state and the need for a European solution, because he refused to appear on the letterhead of their stationery. Jünger had to defend himself all too often against unwanted allies, particularly those 'who support us even in our weakest points, provided we agree with them in the polemic'[18].

Regardless of specific considerations regarding Jünger's individualism, his stance of refusal is nonetheless that of a whole sector of the German right-wing intelligentsia, which refuses to endorse, with its signature, the growing party conformism of National Socialism. January 1933, when National Socialism came to power, marked both the height of the movement's popularity and the moment when it began to alienate the sympathies of a certain educated sector that had contributed to its rise. Whilst some of the ideologues of the 'conservative revolution' turned to National Socialism – and here we should mention, alongside the racists Clauss and Günther, conservative philosophers such as Bäumler and Krieck – a whole other group remained on the sidelines, adopting a more or less veiled critical stance. This is the so-called 'internal emigration', which was much talked about in post-war Germany – not only because of the alibi offered by the term, but because it did indeed correspond to a widespread sentiment. From this perspective, three memoirs – Jünger's *Jahre der Okkupation*, Gottfried Benn's *Doppelleben* and Ernst von Salomon's *Der Fragebogen* – are exemplary, in that they allow us to grasp, in all its nuances, the initial sympathy for Hitlerism that gradually turns into perplexity and then into conscious hostility. It is a slow process that can be traced back to the eve of the Machtergreifung [19] – or, at the latest, to 30 June 1934 – and which continued until 20 July 1944.

Von Salomon, who in *The Outcasts* provided us with an unrivalled account of the period between the 1919 uprising and Rathenau's assassination, and in *Die Stadt* a portrait of Berlin during the final years of the Weimar Republic, provides in *Io resto prussiano* (the Italian title of *Der Fragebogen*) one of the principal sources for gaining an intimate understanding of the circles in which opposition to the republic—which was to culminate in Nazism—took shape. It is a complex reality, a tangle of men and positions, from which figures now forgotten emerge, such as Captain Ehrardt – the man who had marched on Berlin with his brigade, carrying out the Kapp Putsch – who was one of the greatest hopes of nationalism, and who initially collaborated with Hitler in Munich. Indeed, many pages of *Mein Kampf* were subsequently written in veiled polemic against Captain Ehrardt.

Generally speaking, what disheartens the exponents of the 'conservative revolution' is the mass conformism imposed by the new regime (which was also distasteful to many staunch Nazis, such as Hans F.K. Günther: see the recent book *Mein Eindruck von Adolf Hitler*, Munich 1968), the severity with which it cracked down on elements of the national opposition who hesitated to fall into line, and the persecution of the Jews.

Not that the ‘conservative revolution’ was not, to a greater or lesser extent, tinged with anti-Semitism, but the forms taken by the persecution of Jews in the Third Reich – which did not even spare the few ‘national’ Jews – such as, for example, Hans Joachim Schoeps, leader of a fiercely nationalist and anti-republican ‘Jüdische Vortrupp’ (Jewish Vanguard) – caused widespread unease. For instance, the Jünger brothers resigned from the association of former members of the 73rd Infantry Regiment when it decreed the expulsion of its Jewish members. For his part, Spengler had written in *Decisive Years*, published in 1934, ‘whoever speaks too much of race proves that he has none’.

In particular, the purge of 1 July 1934 came as a severe shock to dissidents on the national right: whilst, on the one hand, some of the most unsavoury elements of National Socialism – such as Röhm and his gang – were eliminated, Hitler nevertheless left a ‘bloody calling card’ in the in-box of each of the dissenting groups. The killing of Strasser was a warning to the National Revolutionaries and left-wing heretics; that of Walter Schotte a warning to Catholic conservatives; and that of Edgar Jüng a threat also aimed at conservative groups in Munich. It was no coincidence that Oswald Spengler’s political writings had been published not long before with a blurb containing Jüng’s laudatory assessment.

With the ‘Night of the Long Knives’, striking left and right, Nazism severed the umbilical cord that bound it to that complex world of circles, salons and sects which had, in the 1920s, formed the breeding ground of the ‘conservative revolution’. And yet a kind of dialogue continued until the very end between the regime and the men of the national opposition: by virtue of their milieu, connections and friendships, they belonged to the camp that had brought down the Weimar Republic; however dissatisfied they might be with the new state of affairs, they could not, in any case, take the path of exile. Accused abroad of being ‘precursors’ and forced into silence in Germany, they chose the path of so-called ‘internal emigration’. They did not change sides, but amongst themselves they accused Hitler of squandering and betraying the hopes, enthusiasm and energy of German nationalism.

Such was the reaction of von Salomon, who listened on the radio to Hitler’s speech announcing the massacre of the SA and rebelled against a rationale of state that struck him as cruel and hypocritical. It is the melancholic assessment of Ernst Jünger, who, after the war, reflects on the host of his readers who were sacrificed on all fronts. It is the disillusionment of Gottfried Benn, who had declared himself a supporter of the new regime in the early months of 1933, but was soon silenced by the party’s cultural hierarchy as a ‘degenerate artist’. Benn chose what he termed ‘the aristocratic form of emigration’, namely service in the Wehrmacht, where he served as a military doctor from 1935 to 1945. For Jünger too – who had withdrawn into an aesthetic ivory tower and, during the war, into the aristocratic circle of von Stülpnagel’s command in Paris – the Wehrmacht was the refuge that allowed him to keep his distance from the unpleasant realities of the Party and the Gestapo.

And yet, it would be too simplistic to reduce the attitude of these figures to outright 'opposition'. If it is 'opposition', it is of a particular and privileged kind. Von Salomon edits a semi-official publication recounting the struggles of the Freikorps. And Jünger's novel, *On the Marble Cliffs* [20], is by no means an anti-Nazi novel: set against the Forest Ranger, a symbol of those forces of chaos and anarchy that seek to level the ancient stratifications established within the landscape of civilisation, the character of Braquemart – the nihilist disciple of Nietzsche, who rediscovers the primordial slave-owning civilisations – is nonetheless the ally of Prince Sunmyra, representative of the aristocracy, and of the two protagonists, who are none other than the author himself and his brother Friedrich Georg. Jünger himself recounted how, over *The Marble Cliffs*, Reichsleiter Bouhler had called for his head, and how Hitler himself – who appreciated his books on warfare – had intervened.

In reality, the fronts of the national revolution had originally been intertwined, and from the very same ranks came the regime's supporters and opponents, the persecutors and the persecuted, the victims and the executioners. And as Ernst Jünger recalled many years later in his diaries:

'Nationalist circles appear to me today as the campfires heralding the general departure. This would have been their natural place: the Berlin attics and the Hamburg cellars merely provided the style of the era. In the morning, the group would disperse, to preserve itself, as one reads in the Norse sagas. The luckiest fell on the battlefields. Others had to flee beyond national borders; they were driven out, beaten to death with sticks, hanged, tortured or, when surrounded, took their own lives. Still others became commanders, police chiefs, lieutenants, rebels, or prisoners serving life sentences, only to be stripped of all these titles, as if they were a pack of cards gathered up and set aside once the game was over. How is it that some of these evenings have remained so deeply etched in my memory? Probably because in them all of that – everything that was to come – was already contained, albeit in a prophetic, spiritual and sublime manner that united us all, whilst there was still no trace whatsoever of the future crude one-sidedness, of the irrevocability that comes with action. Thus, the memory brought about a sort of truce amongst those who met on enemy territory. Sometimes, in times of crisis, I had the feeling that this spirit was still alive, so much so that it was at work behind the scenes – for example, in having a case shelved, in making documents disappear, or in having an aeroplane ready for escape.'

University reform or ideological carnival?

by Adriano Romualdi

excerpt from *Il Conciliatore*, March–April 1970

PROTEST IN THE BACKLIGHT

The student movement has now become the defining phenomenon of this senile phase of Italian democracy. It is therefore worth making a few general observations about it—political, cultural and sociological observations.

The quotation marks around this term are intended to highlight that the 'student movement' comprises only a tiny fraction of the entire Italian university population. It is a fact, however, that the vast majority are utterly apathetic and passive, so that this minority stands as the vanguard of the confusion, misdirection and mystification rampant throughout the world of young people.

Adriano Romualdi

From this point of view, the student movement is truly representative of Italian youth: not because it embodies their aspiration for a more functional and modern education system (this is, after all, a secondary demand within the movement's fanciful agenda), but because it demonstrates the depth to which a certain kind of left-leaning rhetoric—spread by television, the cinema, major publishing houses and all the hidden ideological centres entrenched at the heart of the system—has penetrated immature minds.

Already here a fundamental characteristic of the 'movement' emerges: its inauthenticity – apart from the authenticity of the anger, the discontent and the violence of its most committed elements. For all this protest is, in the end, nothing more than the very same 'protest' of the well-funded intellectuals, the billionaire publishers, and the actors and actresses full of vices and money.

The problem posed to us by the student movement is that of a protest against a system which, in the final analysis, sympathises with the protester; and, at the same time, the question of why this 'protest' fits into the system's democratic rhetoric rather than clashing with it.

1. University reform or ideological carnival?

The first point to establish is that the student 'protest' does not aim at mere university reform, but rather at a certain kind of political and ideological agitation. Even a cursory examination of its themes will convince us of this.

'Student power' is the slogan with which the communists and their useful idiots began to occupy Italian universities from the start of 1968. A slogan clearly modelled on 'Black Power', and, indeed, one of the grotesque 'counter-courses' focused precisely on Black Power, whilst others followed on the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Cuban agriculture, the benefits of drugs and the relationship between 'sexual repression and authoritarianism'. Inside the faculties, large banners proclaimed that 'the Viet Cong will win' or urged people to 'swim like Mao'. The faces, beards and clothes left no doubt as to the nature of the 'protesters': it was the Marxist race, as Malaparte described it in some remarkable passages of *Mamma marcia*: 'the Marxist race that had by now invaded Europe, having come from who knows where, with its smell of dirty flesh, sweaty armpits and unwashed hair'.

'Student power' is a crude, demagogic slogan with which the Communists are attempting to capitalise on the serious problems afflicting Italian universities. One need only consider that the University of Rome, one of the finest achievements of Fascism, was built to accommodate 10,000 students in 1936, and today, thirty years later, is crammed with more than 80,000. That throughout Italy there is a shortage of lecture theatres, libraries and laboratories; that there are not enough teaching staff; and that many professors – the 'barons of the chairs', as they are called – turn up at their faculties a couple of times a year, just like the bigwigs of politics, with Moro at the forefront.

Moreover, it is clear that the path to university reform does not lie in the mass university demanded by the occupiers as a counter to a hypothetical 'school of the bosses'. The problem with the university lies precisely in the fact that it has become a mass institution; hence the inadequate facilities, and hence also 'academic authoritarianism', that is, the impossibility of human contact between the teacher and the excessively large number of students. Countries free from these ills, whose university systems could serve as a model for us—Germany, England and the United States—certainly do not have mass universities, but rather universities that are highly specialised and elite.

In England and America, the college-style university prevails, where students live on campus for the duration of their studies in close contact with their lecturers. It is clear that this type of university is one for a minority.

There are, however, a great many schools that provide technical, vocational and language training, enabling students to find employment immediately without spending years chasing 'a piece of paper'. Modernising the education system should not be understood as further massification of universities – with the consequent increase in bureaucratic inefficiencies – but rather as a means of enhancing the quality and streamlining the structures of universities. Building truly modern universities – this is important – but even more important is creating a large number of new schools where useful and practical skills are taught, where students can quickly acquire the professional knowledge required by a society that is continually expanding its scientific and commercial foundations. The problems facing Italian schools and universities cannot be resolved with that demagogic mindset that seeks to level the playing field and open all doors to everyone.

We have already seen this in the case of lower secondary schools: the old lower secondary school system has been ruined by lowering its standards, without thereby creating anything new. It is true that our type of education is essentially elitist, unsuited to the rapid growth of the school-age population. But this does not mean that we should water down our excellent education system – capable of imparting a true culture, and therefore also a comprehensive understanding of complex modern life – in order to create hybrid and bloated institutions. You do not modernise an elegant two-storey villa by building ten storeys of concrete on top of it, at the risk of causing it to collapse, but rather by constructing the concrete building next to it.

This, however, requires a practical rather than a demagogic mindset. It presupposes an awareness that a certain kind of higher education must remain, precisely so that there are still people capable of finding their way through the growing maze of specialisms – people with the ability to see the bigger picture and possess leadership skills. At the same time, however, there must be a proliferation of schools, colleges and laboratories from which tomorrow's technicians will emerge, thoroughly educated and trained for the myriad specific tasks of modern life. In England, which has always been one of the most practical countries in the world, the university is still an elite institution. Yet there is a whole range of institutions and courses for those wishing to embark on technical, practical and well-paid careers.

But the activists of the 'student movement' do not want any of this. They are against a 'class-based' university; in other words, they want an even more oppressive, bloated and mass-produced university. They want the abolition of examinations, that is, the removal of any form of assessment that might lead to selection. This is exactly the opposite of what happens in the countries of the Soviet bloc, where education is taken extremely seriously and selection is extremely strict. They want a 'new culture', which, on closer inspection, turns out to be that now very old rehash of Marxism, sexual liberation, and black and Asian racism that is doled out to us daily by the press and television. They want a 'new sociology', which is in fact the old Frankfurt School sociology of the Jews Marcuse and Adorno, who were expelled and ridiculed by the Nazis thirty-five years ago.

They want ‘student power’, that is to say, the dictatorship of that tiny fringe of students consumed by Marxism, which introduces permanent demagoguery into the universities and prevents the selection of leaders and the in-depth study that are the guarantee of greater seriousness in public life and greater national efficiency.

The Ideology of Protest

by Adriano Romualdi

excerpt from *Il Conciliatore*, March–April 1970 (‘CONTESTAZIONE CONTROLUGE’); continues from the previous part ‘University reform or ideological carnival?’

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2. The ideology of ‘protest’

‘Student power’ is a mythical phrase that forms part of a certain general myth about life, a myth that includes ‘black power’ and LSD, Fidel Castro and the pill, Che Guevara, Marcuse and the shaggy mop.

This mythology of a rotten bourgeoisie hoping for ‘revolution’, in order to conquer ever-new paradises of freedom and filth, is in no way an antithesis to the system, but merely the system’s internal evolution towards its inevitable conclusion: the decay of the white races and the decline of the West. The occupiers claim to be fighting against society, but their myths, their customs and their conformism are precisely those of the very society they claim to be fighting against.

They claim to be against the state, yet state television fawns over them and coddles them; they claim to be against the government, yet the socialists in power protect them; they claim to offer an alternative to the spirit of the times, yet their hairstyles, their clothes, their attitudes, their folk songs, and their ‘beat’ girls are as perfectly in tune with the spirit of the times as one could possibly imagine. They pose as ‘anti-Americans’, but they are rotten with Americanism to the core: their jackets, their trousers, their caps are those of the San Francisco beatniks; their prophet is Allen Ginsberg; their banner is LSD; their folk songs are those of the Black people of Mississippi; their spiritual homeland is Greenwich Village. They are Marxists, but not in the barbaric manner of the Russians or the Chinese, but in that particular way in which a certain type of young American, lacking in civilisation, is a Marxist. They proclaim the ‘link with the working class’, the ‘connection between the semantics of student protest and the dialectic of the working-class world’, but nothing is further removed from the hearts of real workers and peasants than their snobbery; no one is further removed from the mindset of those who must struggle with the most basic necessities than these chicks hatched from the egg of a rotten bourgeoisie. Their problem is drugs; that of the workers is bread.

For this is the sociological aspect of the matter: it is in no way a question of the struggle of the student proletariat against a university system that is, in so many respects, so backward, so lacking in real support for students in need—with no halls of residence, no university canteens, no beds for those coming from outside the city. Rather, it is the uprising of a minority of armchair intellectuals, of young and wealthy bourgeois who break the monotony of an existence that is far too easy by playing at being Chinese or Castroists. The strongholds of the student revolt were precisely the snobbish faculties, such as the Faculty of Architecture in Rome, where – against a backdrop of walls bearing the slogan 'urban guerrilla warfare' – the occupiers' elegant sports cars were parked in double rows.

In reality, the student unrest, set against a backdrop of genuine problems and real shortcomings in the education system, does not lend itself in any way to a class-based interpretation, but is a typical ideological uprising, rooted in the ideas – or rather, the fixed ideas – with which a certain minority has become saturated. It is the revolt of a minority of bourgeois communists nurtured in the sheltered environments of certain traditionally 'red' faculties such as Arts, Physics and Architecture. It is the revolt of the long-haired, the scruffy, the armchair Bolsheviks – a youth that, rather than being 'burnt out', might be described as 'sprawled about'.

It is no coincidence that they call Marcuse their prophet. What, in fact, is this 'Marcusianism', explained in a nutshell? It is Marxism rethought in the light of its historical failure and relaunched, no longer as a scientific theory of economic development, but as pure rhetoric of anarchy.

Marx had conceived his system at the dawn of the industrial age, when the drive for capital accumulation – necessary to set up machinery and factories – had led to the ruthless exploitation of the urban masses. This concentration and exploitation, according to his prophecy, would intensify to the point of provoking a revolution by the exploited. Subsequently, however, capitalism proved capable of producing such wealth that it could be channelled throughout society, bringing about a marked improvement in the living conditions of the working class. It was not socialism, nor trade union struggles – it was industrial capitalism itself, first and foremost, that created the conditions for workers' prosperity. In the more mature capitalist societies, such as those of Britain or Germany, the worker is no longer a poor proletarian who thinks day and night of revolution in accordance with Karl Marx's dreams.

And here is the hatred of 'neo-capitalism' – as the Marxist calls the form of capitalism that has dared to betray the prophet's predictions – that capitalism which, much to its own and Marx's chagrin, is capable of enriching rather than impoverishing the worker. Here is the critique of the 'consumer society', led by those who have consumed enough and who 'protest' even on behalf of those who have never consumed at all. Here is Marcuse, the archetypal Marxist intellectual who wants society to atone for the failure of his ideology and preaches revolution for revolution's sake, anarchy for anarchy's sake. Thus, the worker—integrated into bourgeois society and uninterested in Marxist clamour—is replaced by the blasé young man, the daddy's boy with the roadster and a portrait of Che on his bedside table.

In a supreme irony, the student revolt, which has ‘Marxism’ written on its banners, actually refutes the Marxist theory of the economic basis of all political movements. The student revolt is a typical ideological, bookish uprising, churned out by ‘committed’ magazines and the Feltrinelli bookshop, just like the protest badges and portraits of Che sold in department stores as wallpaper. This revolt, which takes issue with consumer culture, is a typical expression of ‘cultural consumption’, of a book boom built on sex and Marxism, on drugs and Che Guevara, on Fidel Castro and naked women.

From a market perspective, the ‘student movement’ activist is the typical consumer of protest culture, who gulps down his daily ration of that Marxist, sex-obsessed, graphically explicit literature which the major publishing houses are flooding the market with in ever-increasing quantities. The cultural consumer is progressive, Chinese and anti-racist; for the same reason that they wear blue jeans and drink Coca-Cola, they ‘consume’ the pornographic novel or Che Guevara’s diary just as one ‘consumes’ a tin of beans or a roll of toilet paper; they ‘consume’ the youth revolt, which is now manufactured and sold like any other commodity.

Right-Wing Parties, Protest and the Political Significance of the Student Movement

by Adriano Romualdi

excerpt from *Il Conciliatore*, March–April 1970 (‘CONTESTAZIONE CONTROLUGE’); continues from the previous section ‘The ideology of protest’

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3. Right-wing parties and ‘protest’

The question that arises at this point is as follows: how is it that such a blatantly inauthentic ‘revolution’ has managed to take hold among the youth – and not just the more conformist elements, but also the most energetic and imaginative? The answer is simple: because there was nothing left on the other side.

Buried under a heap of bourgeois and jingoistic indifference – under the idiotic respectability of the guarantee that it was ‘definitely national, definitely Catholic, definitely anti-Marxist’ – the right no longer had a slogan to offer the youth.

In an era of continental and European problems, it stood guard over South Tyrol’s petrol drum; in an age of growing youthful fervour, it told them to ‘behave yourselves’; in an age of ideological offensives and confrontations, it slept soundly because the FUAN’s share of the vote in the ‘mini-parliaments’ remained static. Fossilised in the rearguard trenches of bourgeois patriotism, incapable of stirring up the great myth of tomorrow—the myth of Europe—the official youth organisations were vegetating, having lost all contact with the world of ideas, culture and history.

It took no more than a breath of wind to sweep away this stagnation, which sought to be cunning but was merely idiotic. The first occupations were enough to realise that on the other side – that of the right – there was nothing left. The so-called youth leadership allowed itself to be overwhelmed in a matter of days, without imagination and without glory. When the red flags flew in those universities which, until a few years earlier, had been the strongholds of the national right, many looked to the right, waiting for a sign. But the signal never came: what was lacking – more than courage – was initiative and ideas among the young people, who were ready.

Having come of age in the corridors of the party, in a climate of cunning and opportunism, this so-called young leadership – now reduced to just three or four names – had absolutely nothing to say in the face of the formidable ideological offensive of the left. It was simply swept away.

The tragic division of Europe; the blood on the Berlin Wall; nine European countries reduced to colonies of the USSR; 300 million Europeans without political clout, without a will of their own, without nuclear weapons: all these could have served, for years on end, as powerful rallying cries. Finally, the great banner of European unity to be waved in an anti-communist and anti-democratic vein, against the Russians and the Americans. What other ruling class would have failed to bring its causes to the attention of Italian youth?

Instead, they managed to shut themselves away in the ghetto of the most reactionary banality. They let their minds fester over that petty squabble over South Tyrol. Whilst the left, with a whole network of political and cultural circles, agitated with ever-greater imagination on a whole series of revolutionary themes, the youth of the right were condemned to stand guard over 'God, country and family'. There was some talk of Gentile, whose generic patriotism was rather bland and reassuring, but the anti-bourgeois theses of a Julius Evola were carefully avoided. The watchword was to love one's country and reconciliation, and to hate divorce, pornographic films and the Süd Tiroler Volkspartei. Fascists, yes, but in moderation; as for 'Nazis', they were not even to be mentioned.

Is it any wonder, then, that many of the finest young people on the right have become 'Chinese'? For a young man of a truly fascist temperament, the extreme rhetoric, the violence and the vibrant flags of the 'Chinese' came to replace what the official, lukewarm and ageing right could no longer provide.

Is it any wonder, then, that the phenomenon of the Nazi-Maoists arose as a reaction?

I hasten to point out that this reaction, however understandable, was nonetheless unjustifiable. Firstly, because many of these Nazi-Maoists were merely young gentlemen trying to keep up with the times. But even those who sincerely hoped to create a new revolutionary front disappeared into the forest of red flags of their 'allies'. Their vague ideology was swallowed up by Marxist jargon. They sowed doubts, from which only communism stood to gain.

I would, however, like to recall that episode – much talked about at the time – in which a motley assembly listened in turn to excerpts from both Evola and Mao Tse-Tung. It was like a pause, a moment of suspension before coming up against the irreconcilability of two ideologies.

And yet, it goes to show how a revolutionary, anti-bourgeois right-wing vision would at the very least have disoriented the protesters, and how the protest movement could have been wrested from their grasp had there been a less trite and conventional agenda to fall back on.

4. The political significance of the 'student movement'.

What the right failed to grasp – the need to rejuvenate its agenda – was well understood by the Italian Communist Party (PCI).

The PCI has consciously cultivated a whole mythology through cultural, political and artistic associations, which are guaranteed the utmost freedom to criticise the party, but which promote a certain kind of discourse designed to draw young people into the realm of communism. The fact is that the Communist Party has for years understood a truth that has not yet dawned on anyone in our circles, namely that an extremist party, in a non-revolutionary period, with a static international situation and a certain complacent sense of well-being at home, can only pursue an ideological offensive, supported by minorities steeped in a certain myth of life and who are thrust forward to achieve psychological effects.

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) has also realised that a certain Russian-style 'cell-based' communism is now far too austere for the times we live in, and has staked its hopes on exotic, romantic, tropical forms of communism; on Black and Asian powers; on communisms that are scabby, lice-ridden and fanciful; the communism of Che and the cha-cha-cha, of Luther King and Hallelujah.

Black Power: one example of 'trendy communism, which appeals to an increasingly wild youth'

This is the fashionable communism, the communism that appeals to an increasingly wild youth. The epicentre of this new communism is the publishing house of the communist billionaire Giangiacomo Feltrinelli (known to his friends as 'Giangi'), the Giangiacomo Rousseau of the new revolution. Every age has the heroes and 'Giangiacomos' it deserves. It is from Feltrinelli's bookshops that thousands of books on drugs and Bolivia, on Black people and Fidel Castro, are published; it is there that protest badges can be bought; it is there that the magazine 'Quindici', the mouthpiece of the 'student movement', was launched.

It matters little that the Chinese and Castroist vanguards snub the Italian Communist Party. They are nonetheless sowing a seed that will not be reaped in distant Havana and Beijing, but by our own brand of communism. The 'student movement' draws young people into a way of thinking which – once their youthful fervour has subsided – will turn them into loyal communist voters. The Italian Communist Party (PCI) has always controlled student unrest. No one will believe that the faculty occupations, which dragged on for months on end, would have been possible without the logistical apparatus of the Communist Party, without supplies from the FGC. The food parcels distributed in Rome at the occupied Faculty of Arts were wrapped in Italian Communist Party election leaflets. The professors leading the revolt were the usual suspects: Chiarini, Amaldi and Asor-Rosa. The MPs at the head of the 'student movement' marches were Communist MPs.

What political results does the Communist Party expect from this agitation? First and foremost, to create a climate of youth 'frontism' – a united front of young Catholics and young Communists against the government and, who knows, perhaps tomorrow, 'national' useful idiots and young Communists against NATO. By eroding the anti-communist bias among young Christian Democrats, it lays the groundwork for overcoming the Christian Democrats' anti-communism. Secondly, it puts pressure on the Socialists, forcing them into a 'race to the left' within the centre-left. Thirdly, it puts itself forward as a candidate for participation in government, for which – apart from the Atlantic Alliance – all the conditions are already in place.

Set against this clear-sighted strategy of the Italian Communist Party, which uses university students as a shock force, stands the ineptitude of the current leadership of the youth wing of the right in offering anything new to young people. It is this ineptitude that has led to those defections and that confusion which could have been avoided. For it is clear that one can reject a certain trite, conformist rhetoric without thereby falling into Viet Cong or Guevarist rhetoric. That one can raise the banner of European nationalism without forgetting the guarantees necessary for Europe's security. That one can fight in the universities against the 'established order' but, at the same time, against the communists.

For the Right and fascism, despite their current crisis, still represent the only revolutionary alternative for the youth.

Not the revolution of the tram drivers demanding three thousand lire more; not that of Fidel Castro, in solidarity with Brezhnev as he crushes Prague; not that of the buffoons, the scoundrels, the deluded who speak of 'repression' whilst half of Europe groans under Russian tracks. But the revolt of 400 million Europeans against the Russian peace imposed in 1945.

The revolt against the communist myth that seeks to make us forget this peace and the tears it is drenched in. The revolt against the class-based perspective that prevents Italian workers from realising that only a united Europe will put them on an equal footing with British or German workers.

The revolt of Europeans for the unity and power of Europe, which must also take hold in the universities, shattering the myths and lies of the ‘student movement’.

Romualdi Comments on *Riding the Tiger* (Part One)

by Adriano Romualdi

Excerpt from *Julius Evola: The Man and His Work* (1968)

‘He who rides the tiger cannot dismount’

(Eastern proverb)

The stagnation of the domestic situation in Italy in the late 1950s drove Evola towards personal solutions to the problem of life. His interest shifted towards those individual paths along which one might pass unscathed through the petrified forest of the modern world. *Riding the Tiger* is not at odds with *Men and Ruins* or other earlier books. Evola’s conception remains the same: only the perspective changes. This perspective is no longer social, but individual; no longer optimistic, but pessimistic.

Riding the Tiger is the handbook for those who must live in a world that is not their own, without being overwhelmed, strengthened by their invulnerability. In this sense, it reminds us of the manuals of Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, which emerged from the same climate of decadence and were imbued with the same spirit of stoic steadfastness.

The backdrop to *Riding the Tiger* is the collapse of the modern world, bleak in the final stages of its crisis, yet not devoid of possibility as a ‘negation of a negation’. One need not be a follower of any particular view of history to agree that the contemporary era bears the hallmarks of a time in dissolution.

The surge of the masses, sprawling, formless cities, social instability, the obsession with money and sex, ephemeral and feverish myths, a taste for the gigantic and a distinct sense of transience: these are the hallmarks of an age in which man, rather than living, is lived by collective and instinctive processes over which he has only minimal control. The modern world is a tiger unleashed, but, as an Eastern proverb warns, ‘he who rides the tiger cannot dismount’. One might as well remain in the saddle and wait for the tiger, exhausted, to collapse to the ground, for the elemental forces reawakened at the end of time, ‘being devoid of any connection with a higher principle, are, in the end, bound by a measured chain’.

Meanwhile, given that certain social and emotional aspects will be inexorably consumed in the modern world's phase of self-destruction, it would be wise to distance oneself in good time from that which is transitory and to anchor oneself to that which, by its very nature, cannot be destroyed. For, in times of collapse, those who rely on the least fall the least.

That Christianity survives as an organisation and as a social moral code is a fact. It is an equally certain fact that the divine, the religious meaning of life, no longer speaks to a society set on the conquest of material goods. 'God is dead,' Nietzsche proclaimed as long as ninety years ago. Whilst at the turn of the century this sense of the world's desacralisation was the drama of a few visionaries (Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Rimbaud), after the First World War—and even more so after the Second—the sense of life's absurdity has taken hold of vast masses. Phenomena such as the teddy-boys, the beatniks, the halbstarker, the existentialists and the 'angry men' are, for Evola, clear indicators of a sense of emptiness spreading through society.

Marxists claim to fill this void with what Evola calls 'the economic-social myth'. But, even setting aside the sheer stupidity of this myth, the indisputable fact remains that it is precisely where the masses have attained the greatest prosperity that we are confronted with the spread of nothingness.

In the 'world where God is dead', where a rule of conduct enshrined by tradition or custom has been lost, man finds his misery, his peril and his greatness in deriving a law from within himself.

This situation found a dramatic echo in Nietzsche who, at a time when a superficial atheism was celebrating the severing of religious bonds, protested that it was not enough to be free from something, but that one had to be free for something. This raised the need to rediscover a centre of being beyond the concepts of God, Good and Evil characteristic of religions of Semitic origin. But Nietzsche reached his limit in a fundamentally naturalistic mindset. As Evola highlights in the course of a penetrating critique, he ends up presenting us with a naturalistic conception of good and evil, which are respectively a 'plus of life' (the strong) and a 'minus of life' (the weak), presupposing life as something that is constantly ascending, whilst everyday observation all too often shows it to be concerned solely with preserving itself as best it can. In reality, one cannot seek in life—which has no meaning whatsoever apart from its own self-preservation—a criterion of morality, freedom or value.

But only the theist will believe that this value can be found solely in dogma, in faith. There is a root of metaphysical freedom that is innate; there exists within man something uncreated, unconditional and indestructible. It is this dimension of being that must be evoked by imposing upon oneself a discipline that is justified in itself and whose aim is the removal of what is spontaneous and accidental, and the reawakening of what is free and necessary. One must learn to act for the sake of action itself, without regard for advantage. One must make this action a microcosm, perfect in itself, free from hope and fear. One must learn to live in the timeless dimension of life, as if every day were one's last. One must be prepared 'to be destroyed, if need be, without thereby being harmed' in order to grasp, from this sacrificial disposition, the meaning of a 'super-life'.

Those who have reached this level – and it is not for everyone – will also be able to throw themselves into the most turbulent whirlpools of modernity 'riding the tiger':

‘confident in oneself because one’s essential core is being, rather than life, one can face anything, surrender to everything and open oneself to all without losing oneself: thus accepting every experience, no longer to test and know oneself but to develop one’s full potential, in anticipation of the transformations of the self that may occur, and the new insights that may thereby present themselves and be revealed.

(…) the ability to open oneself up without losing oneself, particularly in a period of dissolution, is of particular importance. It is the way to rise above any possible transformation, including the most dangerous ones: the ultimate limit can be found in that passage from the Upanishads which speaks of the one against whom death can do nothing, because death has become part of his being.

There is, therefore, the coexistence of detachment alongside fully lived experience, the recurring union between calm ‘being’ and the substance of life. The result of this union is, essentially, a very special kind of intoxication—lucid, one might say almost intellectualised and magnetic—which is completely opposed to that which derives from an ecstatic openness to the world of elemental forces, instinct and ‘nature’. In this very special, refined and subdued exhilaration one must see the vital nourishment necessary for an existence in a state of freedom within a chaotic world left to its own devices’.

Anyone who has managed to awaken this different current of living within themselves will understand transcendence not as a dogma, but as an experience.

Having outlined the characteristics of ‘the man whose freedom does not mean ruin’, Evola, following a masterful critique of existentialism, considers the processes of dissolution of the dominance of the personality.

Here too, what is under threat is bourgeois individualism – freedom, wealth, culture – with all that was positive, yet also fragile, that it might have possessed. It may well be that the processes of levelling currently underway will shatter many ‘personalities’, many ‘beautiful souls’, many hearts lost in self-admiration, and, certainly, what will result will be a dull, bleak mass of people. But here too, destruction threatens something incidental, something peripheral: the core of the self, for those who know how to withdraw into it, remains free.

The problem lies in conceiving a positive anti-individualism and in restoring within oneself the ‘typical’, formative image that towers above the individual with all his pettiness. It is not a matter of going below, but above the personality, towards that which is ‘typical’, eternal.

The superior man described by Evola does not conform, does not become flattened, but stands ready to cast aside many reservations, just as one who enlists in an army renounces not only one’s clothes and luggage but also many habits and many frivolities of the ‘self’. ‘Active impersonality’: this is the formula by which one ‘rides the tiger’ when it pounces to devour all personal intimacy. Not ‘passive impersonality’, endured, the ‘collective mind’ of the communist herd or the promiscuity of the beatnik monkey pack.

To have a personality, yet be prepared to set it aside, ready to cast off many feelings as one would a heavy rucksack that cannot be carried under enemy fire. In this sense, Evola's teaching is also a philosophy of total war, that quintessential manifestation of advanced modernity, the necessary counterpart to its monstrous growth.

Viewed from this perspective, the bourgeois pathos of the 'soul' and the 'individual' crumbles. As the graceful, the sentimental and the psychological fade, reality comes into sharper focus and, as in primordial times, the world stands 'cold and clear, calm and stable'. A new sense of nature awakens, conceived as that which is fixed and objective, in an almost metaphysical clarity. The oleographic and the picturesque no longer speak to the soul capable of intuiting a new dimension of the world:

'Whilst for the bourgeois generation, nature was a sort of idyllic Sunday interlude from city life, and whilst for the more recent generation it is the stage upon which its obtuse, intrusive and polluting bestiality erupts, for our differentiated man it is a school of the objective and the distant; it is something fundamental to his understanding of existence and takes on a comprehensive character. In this light, what was said earlier becomes clear: one can speak of a nature which, in its elementariness, is the great world where the stone and steel panoramas of metropolises, the endless straight roads, and the functional complexes of industrial estates stand on the same level, for example, as the immense and solitary forests, characterised by a fundamental austerity, objectivity and lack of personality… there will be no landscapes more beautiful than others, but landscapes more distant, more boundless, calmer, colder, harsher, more primordial than others: the language of things, of the world, is not found amongst trees, streams, beautiful gardens, before oleographic sunsets and romantic moonlight, but rather in deserts, rocks, steppes, glaciers, dark Nordic fjords, the relentless suns of the tropics, great currents – indeed, everything that is primordial and inaccessible'.

Having clarified the path along which one can leave behind the dissolution of the individual, Evola addresses the problem of the dissolution of science and art.

Science, which a hundred years ago the positivists saw as the heir to philosophy, has undergone radical re-evaluations (non-Euclidean geometries, quantum theory, etc.), so that it now presents itself as a construction site of working hypotheses that are practically effective but powerless to provide us with any general truth. At the heart of science lies an absolute nihilism because, whilst it places ever-greater material forces at humanity's disposal, it is not thereby capable of making humanity stronger or more self-assured, whilst the very latest hypotheses rule out the possibility that science could ever tell us anything about the ultimate truths of life and death. Even if some may have harboured illusions, science's fundamental inability to provide us with a worldview remains.

For, as one of the greatest physicists of our time, Heisenberg, states, 'the object of research is no longer the object in itself, but nature in relation to the problems that man sets himself'.

‘The system of science,’ writes Evola at the end of his incisive examination of the scientistic myth, ‘is a net that tightens ever more around a something which, in itself, remains incomprehensible, for the sole purpose of being able to subject it to practical ends’.

Alongside the dissolution of knowledge—which affects only a few concerned individuals—lies the dissolution of art, which is having a dramatic impact on the tastes of the general public. Evola’s position, not least because of his refined knowledge of modern art, cannot be that of the philistine clinging to certain terminal forms of the bourgeois world.

That the novel should disintegrate, that intimism should end in filth, that psychology should descend into morbidity, is logical, just as it is logical that democracy should end in communism. The traditional world understood art as the objective expression of a worldview; as a temple, a cathedral, as a sculpture or fresco integrated into a larger whole. It understood art as a manifestation of organised spiritual life, not as fragmented, private, or introspective art, nor as the museum, the academy, or the literary salon. Faced with the extreme, polemical forms into which bourgeois art dissolves, faced with vulgarity and advancing cretinism, there is no need to be more troubled than is necessary.

The distinct type of person Evola discusses passes unscathed through the dissolution of both science and art, for he seeks his certainties from neither art nor science.

Riding the Tiger concludes with a chapter on death. Indeed, death is a possibility that must always be borne in mind in an age that has begun and will end amidst chaotic upheavals. And it is – as in Stoicism – the test of one’s own freedom.

The prospect of death can hold nothing dramatic for those who, beyond the idea of a personal God and the corresponding idea of atheism, know that human existence does not begin with birth nor end with death:

‘in general, but particularly in a chaotic and disintegrating age such as the present one, it may prove difficult to grasp the meaning of the manifestation of one’s being—as a specific, defined person, living at a given time and in a given place, going through these experiences of which this will be the end: it is like the vague sensation of the region one travels through on a night-time journey, where only occasionally do brief, scattered lights reveal certain stretches of the landscape being traversed. Nevertheless, one must retain the feeling, or the premonition, of someone who, having boarded a train, knows that they will alight from it, and that when they do so, they will also see the entire journey they have travelled; and they will go further’.

The issue of death encompasses the issue of suicide, which, in its time, within the framework of a Roman, virile, non-Christian form of religiosity—such as Stoicism—was considered permissible. Here too, Evola reaffirms the freedom of the man liberated from passions over all the acts of his own life, including death.

Yet, whilst reaffirming this freedom, he recognises the contradiction inherent in the act of taking one's own life. Indeed, since the self and being are one and the same, being born—being here—is always, in a certain sense, an act of free choice on the part of the self.

The point is precisely this: to trace back to that invisible act of our will and not to stumble over its effects as if they were something foreign, random or irrational:

'… would not the sensation within oneself of any impatience, any intolerance or even any tedium perhaps attest to the presence of a residue that is all too human, of something not yet resolved in the sense of eternity or, at the very least, of the great non-earthly and non-temporal distances? And if this were the case, would one not be obliged, in the face of one's own self, to refrain from acting?

… To rise above that which can be understood by human reason alone and attain a higher inner plane and an invulnerability otherwise difficult to achieve, are perhaps possibilities which, through appropriate responses, present themselves precisely in those instances where travelling through the night reveals almost nothing of the landscape being traversed, where the theory of Geworfenheit—of an absurd 'being thrown' into the world and into time—would seem to hold true, as well as in a climate where physical existence itself cannot help but present a growing sense of insecurity. If one were to allow the mind to dwell on a bold hypothesis – which might even be an act of faith in a higher sense – once the idea of 'Geworfenheit' has been rejected, once it has been conceived that living here, now, in the world, has meaning precisely because it is always the result of a choice and a will, one might even consider that the very realisation of the possibilities mentioned above – which are more obscured and less conceivable in different situations that are more desirable from a purely human perspective, from the perspective of the 'person' – is the ultimate reason and meaning of that choice made by a 'being' who, in this way, has chosen to measure itself against a difficult yardstick: precisely by living in a world opposed to that which conforms to its nature, that is, opposed to the world of Tradition'.

This is the recurring idea in Evola's work, the one that emerges from his early philosophical books and which, significantly, returns in these final pages of his last major work: existence is the hilt of a sword whose other half is Being, and which can be recovered only insofar as we accept Being as the other half of ourselves.

This is the central crux, the one that gives or takes away meaning from the whole. Not a doubt that is resolved by the light of logic, but a knot that is untied by a 'superior act of faith', as if by the cut of a blade.

Whoever is able to do this will rediscover the lost hilt of the sword by uniting immanence and transcendence. Then the district glimpsed amidst the lights of the night will be bathed in sunlight, and the meaning of the journey will become clear

'We Westerners of this complex age, monks in the cells of our bodies,' wrote Lawrence of Arabia, who was, as well as a soldier, a man acutely aware of the difficulties of his time.

Of course, to a superficial eye, Evola's 'differentiated man' may seem far from monastic: ready to live at the very heart of the modern world and to use its poisons – drugs, sex, anarchy – as antidotes. But he must know how to live with a vigilance that is both monastic and military; he must continually overturn the negative aspects of the modern world, turning his relationship with it into a pure exercise of strength. He must act without becoming entangled, sustained by that inner nakedness in which Meister Eckhart saw the hallmark of the man of God, so that 'the door may slam, but the hinge remains firm'.

The Normandy Landings

"And the Longest Day Came"

by Adriano Romualdi

Excerpt from *The Last Hours of Europe*

Rome has fallen. For the defenders of 'Fortress Europe', this is a bad omen, and its significance soon becomes apparent. Two days later, at dawn on the 6th, the Americans land in Normandy. Prepared for years and planned down to the last detail, the Allied invasion plan – Operation OVERLORD – was set in motion. For months, hundreds of thousands of soldiers had been waiting, ready for action, at bases in southern England. For months, the most formidable air and naval force in history had been gathering, alongside thousands of tanks, tens of thousands of guns, vehicles and landing craft.

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel inspects the defences of the Atlantic Wall after being tasked by Hitler in November 1943 with overseeing the western coastal fortifications

The Germans, too, have been awaiting the major assault for months. But the Atlantic Wall is far from complete: the necessary manpower has been diverted from the air offensive against the Reich due to the damage inflicted on industry. Only at the Pas-de-Calais can it be considered complete, and the high command does indeed expect the invasion to take place in this sector. But in Normandy, the defensive preparations leave much to be desired.

Added to this is the divergence of opinion amongst the German commanders: von Rundstedt fears a 'Maginot-style situation', does not trust the Atlantic Wall and wants to deploy armoured forces inland to encircle the enemy once they have landed; Rommel harbours no illusions; he knows that if the Allies land, they will never leave, and has stated that 'the front line must be the high-water mark'. He also said: 'When they land, we must drive them back into the sea on the very same day. That will be the longest day of the war for Germany.'

The Longest Day

And so ‘the longest day’ arrives: D-Day. But the Germans are not expecting it: the sea is stormy, and an icy wind blows across the waves of the English Channel. People say: ‘They won’t come in this weather.’ To make matters worse, Rommel is in Germany for his wife’s birthday. The telegraph operators pick up the invasion signal broadcast by the BBC for the French Resistance, the secret of which counter-intelligence had managed to uncover. It consists of the lines by Verlaine: ‘Les sanglots longs / des violons de l’automne / blessent mon coeur / d’une langueur monotone’. Some units go on alert. But at Rundstedt’s headquarters, they are sceptical: ‘General Eisenhower,’ they say, ‘certainly wouldn’t announce the invasion on the radio’.

But then, shortly after midnight, enemy paratroopers drop into the coastal area west of Carentan and that in front of Caen, at the two ends of the arc where the invasion fleet will land. The wind scatters them; many perish or fall into German hands. But enough remain to attack the sentries in the dark or seize the bridges, batteries and positions needed to support the landing.

Whilst uncertain reports travelled by telegraph throughout the night from Normandy to Paris, and from Paris to Berchtesgaden, 6,480 transport ships, carrying some 4,000 landing craft, escorted by 6 battleships, 23 cruisers, 122 destroyers, 360 torpedo boats and several hundred frigates, are sailing at full steam towards the beaches of Normandy. 13,000 aeroplanes follow behind them, bearing their cargo of death and destruction.

Between Normandy and Paris, between Paris and Berchtesgaden – where Hitler, having just gone to bed, is fast asleep – the telegraph line carries the first, alarming reports: ‘Sie kommen! They’re coming!’, with alarmed voices repeating one after another: ‘Invasion! Invasion!’.

At dawn on 6 June, the immense fleet came into view of the stunned defenders of the Normandy coast:

‘All around, a strange silence reigned. The curtain of fog over the sea parted. Frerking went outside to have breakfast but, first, he wanted to look through his binoculars. He leaned against the bunker wall. ‘People,’ he said simply, ‘people, they’re here.’ What he saw was seen at that very moment by all the officers and soldiers in the strongpoints and resistance nests along the beach. And they all burst out with the same cry of terror and amazement: ‘The fleet!’… Ships large and small, with turrets, superstructures, funnels, masts, and those grotesque barrage balloons. Like a mysterious city in the greyness of dawn, bathed in the gathering light, an unreal city, a golden city, resplendent.’

Omaha Beach – soldiers of the US 1st Infantry Division having just reached the shore

Before the defenders of the Atlantic Wall could recover from their astonishment, thousands of bombers glided overhead, dropping 12,000 tonnes of bombs – as many as had been dropped throughout 1943 on Germany's most heavily bombed city, Hamburg.

The trenches are levelled. The minefields are blown to smithereens. The bunkers shake to their foundations. All around, men, vehicles and guns are sucked into an unimaginable vortex of fire. The Germans have 13,000 aircraft overhead, enough to pulverise their positions, to riddle the roads, and to hunt down the reinforcing divisions pouring in from the interior. Against them, the Luftwaffe can field barely 319 aircraft.

Even before the first American soldier sets foot on the beach, the Germans have already lost the Battle of Normandy from the outset. But they do not know it. From the torn-up trenches and the shattered bunkers, those still alive fire at the marines advancing through the deep water. Machine-guns crackle; the guns in their emplacements thunder.

On 'Utah' Beach, opposite Saint-Mère-Église, the Marcouf battery held out for five days against the attacks, not hesitating to draw German fire upon itself to divert the assailants. On 'Omaha' Beach, six kilometres long, 3,000 Americans – one every two metres – lay sprawled pitifully just a few hours after the invasion. The British, having just landed, had to face attacks from the 21st Panzer Division.

But this was the only armoured formation facing the landing heads. The Armoured Training Division, the 'Panzerlehr', was 150 km south of Caen and would take more than two days to reach the front, followed step by step by bombers striking both men and tanks. The 12th SS Panzer Division 'Hilerjugend' was plodding along at eight km per hour towards the landing zones, itself under furious aerial bombardment. Around midnight, it reached Evrecy to refuel. But the bombers had got there first: the depots were ablaze. It is now clear that Rommel was right when he said: 'On the day of the invasion, it will be more useful to have a single armoured division on the coast at the time of the landing than three divisions two days later.' But by now it is too late.

At last, the Hitlerjugend Division arrives in Caen. Gruppenführer Witt's order is peremptory: 'The Division is to attack the landed enemy alongside the 21st Panzer Division and drive them back into the sea.' Kurt Meyer, the legendary 'Panzermeyer', rallies his men in his characteristic forceful manner: the Hitler Youth Division is the cream of Hitler's youth; Hitler's youth fears no one in the world, least of all the British. The British – says Meyer – are 'small fry' and will be thrown into the sea.

Operations begin. The enemy vanguard attempting to seize Carpiquet airfield is swept aside. Twenty-eight tanks are set ablaze under fire from Meyer's Panzergrenadiers. On the 8th, an attack is launched; Putot is recaptured, and the advance continues towards Bretteville l'Orgouilleuse. Meyer himself leads the charge from the turret of a Tiger tank; the Regina Rifles are overwhelmed.

Panzer units of the 12th SS Panzer Division 'Hitlerjugend' in France, prior to the Allied landings (free image from Wikimedia Commons, under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Germany licence, Bundesarchiv, Bild 101I-297-1740-19A / Kurth / CC-BY-SA 3.0

But then all hell breaks loose from the sky; enemy fighter planes attack the Panzergrenadiers like a swarm of wasps. Meyer, seeing the fields littered with the bodies of his men, has no choice but to order a retreat.

On the 9th, the Panzerlehr Division also attacked from Tilly to recapture Bayeux. They reached within 5 km of the town. Prince Schönburg-Waldenburg fell at the head of his Panther tanks. But by now the enemy's superiority posed a threat from behind, forcing them to turn back.

The 10th finally seemed to be the day of the long-awaited German armoured offensive. The commander of Panzergruppe West, Geyr von Schweppenburg, had gathered his General Staff in a clearing in the forest to finalise the decisive plan. But enemy fighters swooped down from above, wreaking havoc. The offensive was decapitated before it had even begun.

Countless other officers would fall victim to enemy bombs: General Marcks, commander of the 84th Army Corps; Gruppenführer Witte, commander of the 12th SS Division; and Rommel himself would be strafed by an enemy fighter on 17 July.

Protected by air cover, within a few days the Allies managed to land 100,000 men on the beaches of Normandy. The Germans were forced onto the defensive. Their reinforcements arrived with astonishing slowness.

The 2nd SS Division 'Das Reich' trudged slowly from Toulouse to Saint-Lô for two whole weeks, amidst the chaos of railway lines destroyed by bombing, fighting its way through an area infested with the Maquis. Partisans emerged from their hideouts everywhere, sabotaging the advancing German troops and decimating small, isolated garrisons. Some officers lost their composure, leading to ruthless reprisals such as the destruction of the village of Oradous by elements of the Das Reich Division.

The Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, fresh from the Russian front, was recalled from Belgium. Two further SS armoured divisions, the 9th Hohenstaufen and the 10th Frundsberg, were recalled from the Russian front. They arrived in Nancy on 12 June, when the Allies had landed just one armoured division, but, due to the destroyed communication routes, they did not reach Normandy until 1 July, by which time there were already five Allied armoured divisions there.

The British attempted to take Caen, which was desperately defended by the Hitlerjugend Division.

The vanguard of the British 7th Armoured Division, Montgomery's 'Desert Rats', slipped through a breach opened from Caumont as far as Villers-Bocage. But a lone Tiger emerged from the woods. It was commanded by Michel Wittmann. He is not yet thirty, but has already destroyed 119 tanks on the Eastern Front and holds the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves. The Tiger's 88mm gun roars; Wittmann moves along the flank of the British column and takes out the vehicles one by one. Within minutes, the road is a hellish scene. Seized by panic, the British 7th Armoured Division turns tail. The Tilly front would hold out for weeks yet.

However, on the Cotentin Peninsula, the Americans had overwhelmed the weak German forces. On 18 June, the peninsula was cut off at its base and six American divisions advanced on Cherbourg, defended by a single German division.

Cherbourg put up fierce resistance until 25 June. Individual forts held out until the 30th. The defenders fell into American hands, but not the port facilities, which were systematically destroyed by the Americans in what the Allies would describe as 'the most total, scientific and systematic act of destruction in the history of the world'.

At the headquarters of the 12th SS-Panzer-Division: Kurt 'Panzermeyer' Meyer, Fritz Witt, Max Wünsche, in June 1944 (free image from Wikimedia Commons, under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Germany licence, Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1989-099-06 / Woscidlo, Wilfried / CC-BY-SA 3.0)

At the other end of the landing front, Field Marshal Montgomery's ambitious plans repeatedly came up against German resistance on the Caen front.

The Canadians crossed the Odon, which was choked with corpses, captured Hill 112, and threatened to break through to the south-west of the city. Hausser's armoured troops, ready for a counter-attack, were pinned down by a terrible bombardment. But Gruppenführer Bittrich ordered relentlessly: 'Recapture Hill 112!' The Tigers laboriously clawed their way to the summit; the British offensive was blunted. But, in the days that followed, the fighting continued. Hitler had ordered that 'Caen be defended to the last man', and the hardy Grenadiers of the Hitlerjugend Division took this literally. Fighting rages at the airport, around the Ardenne convent, with bayonets, pickaxes and rifle butts. On 9 July, the British finally enter Caen, more than a month later than envisaged in the plans for Operation Overlord. But the Germans are still holding out beyond the Orne, in the southern and eastern suburbs of the city.

The war in the hedgerows

Meanwhile, along the front stretching from the base of the Cotentin Peninsula to Caen, a war of position had developed. The Normandy bocage – a landscape of small fields enclosed by low walls and hedgerows – offered natural defences against tanks.

The Americans advanced cautiously. Every hedge was a machine-gun nest, every embankment a firing position, every clump of scrub a camouflaged Tiger tank ready to open fire. On 3 July, the US Seventh Army Corps attacked southwards towards Coutances but suffered as many as 5,000 casualties to advance 6 km as far as La Haye-du-Puits. That is nearly a thousand dead per kilometre; one dead per metre; a heavy price in blood.

The advance continues, towards Lessay. The men of the Panzerlehr Division are putting up fierce resistance against the Americans. Another 5 km, another 5,000 dead.

The Americans had overwhelming superiority in terms of equipment, but the Germans countered with ingenuity, tenacity and courage. 'The Germans,' recalls an American officer, 'didn't have much left, but they knew damn well how to make the most of it.' The US VII Corps attempts to break through from Carentan towards Periers: on the first day, it loses 1,400 men to gain 200 metres and capture six German prisoners.

The second day saw a slight improvement: 1,500 metres and 750 dead. Both American divisions lost 8,000 men in 11 days. Their generals were impressed by the German resistance: 'The Germans are holding out solely thanks to the courage of their soldiers. We outnumber them ten to one in the infantry, fifty to one in the artillery, and as for the air force, there's simply no comparison.'

The advance continued towards Saint-Lô, fiercely defended by paratroopers, the Panzerlehr Division, and the bloodied remnants of what had once been some of the finest German divisions. Finally, at the cost of a further 6,000 dead, Saint-Lô was taken. Twelve Allied divisions suffered 40,000 casualties in 17 days to advance the front by 11 km. 'We won the battle,' a survivor would later say, 'but if we consider the high price in human lives paid by us Americans, we lost it.'

Meanwhile, on the Caen front, Montgomery went back on the offensive. At dawn on 18 July, three air fleets – 2,000 bombers – carpet-bombed the area to the south and south-east of the city. The German positions were pulverised; the trenches buried, the guns shattered, the machine-gun nests levelled. In this no-man's-land, in this lunar landscape of craters from which scattered German infantrymen re-emerge here and there, dazed, the British armoured divisions advance. The defences in the southern part of Caen are overwhelmed. The British advance unhindered for about ten kilometres. Nothing now seems able to stop them.

Douglas A-26 Invader bombers in action

But then, the 88s of the anti-tank units open fire; the Tigers of the II Panzerkorps lunge at them; Meyer's grenadiers charge, man by man, man against tank, with their Panzerfausts. The British tanks, growing ever more numerous, burst into flames. The survivors retreat 'in small, despondent groups on foot, blackened by smoke and suffering severe burns'. By evening, Montgomery's famous 2nd Division alone had lost 126 tanks, and the Guards Armoured Division 60. The British offensive is crushed. South of Caen, the German lines still hold.

But enemy pressure on Caen is concentrating the best German forces in that sector. At the other end of the front, where German troops have been enduring daily assaults for a month under impossible conditions, disaster looms.

On 25 July, more than 2,000 bombers descended like a swarm of locusts on the positions held by the Armoured Training Division, the 'Panzerlehr'. 2,000 bombers over an area measuring seven by three kilometres: each one had to plough through a strip three and a half metres wide, sowing death in its wake.

Bayerlein's field telephones tried in vain to reach the front line; the front no longer existed. Through the breach, the Americans began to pour through. But not entirely: isolated groups were still fighting. The survivors were still giving them a hard time. Yet the end of all organised resistance now seemed a matter of hours; after that, American armoured divisions would spill out of Normandy.

On 26 July, a senior officer arrives at Bayerlein's command post:

'The lieutenant-colonel, in his immaculate uniform with crimson stripes on his trousers, is somewhat embarrassed in the presence of the general and his officers, who have not shaved for several days, nor eaten a hot meal…

'General,' he says, 'Field Marshal von Kluge insists that the line from Saint-Lo to Périers must be held.'

Silence. Kaufmann looks at Bayerlein. Major Wrede looks out of the window.

"The line from Saint-Lo to Périers must be held," repeats Bayerlein. "May I ask with what?"

The lieutenant-colonel pretends not to hear the question: "That is the order I have brought you, General," he replies. "You must hold the line; no one is to abandon their positions"…

Bayerlein stares at the officer. An awkward silence spreads through the room. Outside, the sound of a stable door slamming can be heard…

The general feels the blood rushing to his temples…

He leans on the table and speaks softly, but his words come out as hard as boulders:

"Out there, in front of us, everything is holding, Lieutenant-Colonel, everything. My grenadiers, my sappers, my tank crews – they're all holding firm.

No one is abandoning their positions, not a single soul. They're in their foxholes, still and silent, because they're dead. Dead, do you understand?" Then Bayerlein approaches the lieutenant-colonel: "Inform the Field Marshal that the Armoured Training Division has been destroyed. Only the dead are holding the line now. But I will not leave this place, if that is the order."

The officer delivering the message may not even reply. A tremendous explosion shakes the house. The ground trembles. An immense tongue of fire shoots up into the sky. The doors are torn from their hinges. The windows shatter. The large ammunition depot at Dangy has been hit by fighter-bombers and has blown up. Thousands of rockets sweep through the region with a roar, leaving behind a flickering trail of fire.'

In the vacuum created in front of their lines, the Americans surge out of Normandy.

Schematic map of the invasion of Normandy, showing the movements of the fleet heading for the beaches and the airborne forces (click to enlarge)

By 1 August, Avranches was in their hands. Through the breach, using a single bridge, Patton moved his armoured forces into Brittany. The German air force's attempts to destroy the bridge were in vain. Within three days, 100,000 Americans, with 15,000 vehicles, were sweeping through the roads of Brittany.

'Go on, go on': Patton's tanks advanced without regard for their flanks. Only the objective mattered.

On the 4th, Rennes was reached; on the 5th, Vannes; on the 6th, Nantes, whilst Brest was under siege. Hitler was furious at this 'cowboy who, using a single bridge, is letting an army take a stroll through Brittany'. Von Kluge proposed a retreat behind the Seine. But the Führer took a different view. He ordered a counter-attack to recapture Avranches and cut off the Americans, who were sweeping through Brittany, from their bases in Normandy.

On the night of the 7th, four armoured divisions – the 2nd under General von Luttwitz, the 116th under Count Schwerin, part of the 1st SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler under Brigadeführer Wisch, and the 2nd SS Das Reich – without any artillery preparation, so as not to alert the enemy, swooped down on the American lines.

Mortain was recaptured by storm, and the advance continued rapidly towards Avranches, which lay just ahead within reach. But then dawn broke. The sky was clear, a splendid summer sky – ideal weather for the enemy air force.

Allied fighter-bombers targeted the German forces in the narrow corridor of the advance. The German infantry were forced into the trenches, into their foxholes, deep within the thicket. Curses were hurled skywards: 'If those blokes aren't flying, what on earth are we doing here?'

‘Those blokes’ are the Luftwaffe pilots who had promised to send 300 aircraft to support the offensive. The 300 fighters did indeed take off from their bases near Paris, but the Allied air force immediately intercepted them. Not a single one of them would reach the skies over Normandy.

Within twenty-four hours, the outcome of the German counter-offensive was already compromised. At the same time, the British armoured divisions launched their third, powerful hammer blow south of Caen. On the evening of 7 August, Montgomery went on the offensive with no fewer than 600 tanks: ‘Operation Totalize’ was intended to secure what the two previous offensives had failed to achieve.

Bombers swept across the disorganised German lines and, as dawn broke on 8 August, six mighty columns of tanks, four abreast, were slowly advancing across the terrain ravaged by bombs. ‘Panzermeyer’ watched them through his binoculars as they advanced. ‘If those come through,’ he says, ‘it’s all over for us.’ Promptly, he launches the last 50 tanks of the Hitlerjugend Division into a counter-attack.

Allied aircraft swoop furiously down on him; but it is too late – the Panzers have already set off. The Tigers advance into the heart of the enemy’s offensive zone. At their head is Michel Wittmann, the intrepid tank destroyer from Villers-Bocage. The British are caught off guard. Once again, the German front holds. The ‘front’: an ambitious term to describe those wretched, battered kilometres where the remnants of what were once the finest German divisions are seeking a way out. But an iron wedge has been driven into the heart of the enemy’s advance. The Canadians are wasting time. The German lines are being reinforced.

German armoured vehicles during the Battle of Normandy

By evening, Meyer’s tanks had returned to their positions in the Quesnay woods. Michel Wittmann was no longer with them. He had been killed, after destroying his 130th tank. But Field Marshal Montgomery’s armoured forces had been halted 12 kilometres short of Falaise. For the third time, the British offensive had failed.

It is now too late, however, to rejoice. On 8 August, the Americans took Le Mans; on 10 August, they turned north towards Alençon, which fell into their hands on 12 August. The German front in Normandy is now nothing more than a salient, encircled on all sides by Allied forces and dangerously extended towards the west.

The British, advancing from Caen, and the Americans, moving up from Alençon-Argentan, could cut it in two at any moment. The retreat begins. The enemy attempts to cut off the escape routes. The Canadians storm Falaise. But standing in their way are the last 500 men and the last 15 tanks of the 12th SS Hitlerjugend. For three days, 60 of 'Panzermeyer's' men barricade themselves inside the Falaise Grammar School. Only four of them will be taken alive by the Allies.

On the 20th, 100,000 Germans, along with the remnants of the finest armoured units, were trapped in the Flers –Falaise–Argentan triangle. The desperate battle to break out began. With weapons in hand, fighting with bayonets, at night, in small groups, they forced their way through the enemy lines.

Gruppenführer Hausser breaks through, an eye patch over one eye, submachine gun in hand. Parachute General Meindl breaks through, with about twenty of his men. 'Panzermeyer' breaks through, his head bandaged, pistol in hand, flanked by his trusted Cossack Michel from Dnipropetrovsk, who never lets him out of his sight. Fifty thousand men break through. Another 50,000, including 10,000 dead, remain trapped in the pocket. But the Allies' hopes of a second Stalingrad are dashed. There is no mass surrender. Of the 15 divisional commanders, only three fall into Allied hands.

The Battle of Normandy is over. Since 6 June, the Germans have lost 400,000 men, 1,300 tanks, 20,000 vehicles and several thousand guns. The Western Front is shattered. The remnants of the fighting divisions retreat with great difficulty towards Germany.

On 25 August, the Allies entered Paris. On 3 September, they reached Brussels. On 4 September, they arrived in Antwerp. Meanwhile, Allied forces that had landed in Provence on 15 August were advancing up the Rhône valley. By the 27th they were in Marseille, by 3 September in Lyon, and by the 8th in Besançon. Von Kluge, accused by Hitler of having caused the catastrophe on the Western Front, took his own life after sending a noble letter to the Führer. 'I am going,' he wrote, 'where most of my comrades now are.'

The tragedy of Army Group B was over.

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